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MAUPRAT

BY

GEORGE SAND

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

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WITH TEN ILLUSTRATIONS BY

LE BLANT

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INTRODUCTION

In the most secluded and wooded portion of that district on the confines of Marche and Berry, called La Varenne, nestles in a ravine a ruined castle, the impaired turrets of which one can not discern until within a hundred feet of the principal portcullis. The venerable trees which surround it and the overhanging rocks enshroud it in such perpetual darkness that at noonday one can scarcely cross the neglected approach without coming in contact with the gnarled trunks and rubbish, which obstruct the way at every step.

This somber ravine and gloomy castle are called La Roche-Mauprat.

It is not long since the last of the Mauprats to whom this estate fell, had the roofing removed and cut down all the timber; then, as if to insult the memory of his ancestors, he razed to the ground the portal, the north tower, and the surrounding walls, and departed with his workmen, shaking the dust from his feet and abandoning his property to foxes, osprays, and adders. From that time when the woodmen and colliers who inhabited the scattered huts in the neighborhood, passed during

the day along the summit of the ravine, they whistled with a defiant air, or muttered a malediction; but when the day was drawing in, woodmen and colliers passed along hastily and in silence, from time to time making the sign of the cross, as if to exercise the evil spirits which reigned over those ruins.

I confess that I never passed this ravine at night without experiencing a sense of uneasiness; and I dare not state upon oath that on certain stormy nights I did not put spur to my horse, in order to leave it, as quickly as possible, behind me.

In my childhood even I ranked the name of Mauprat with those of Cartouche and Blue-beard.

Often at the hunt, when my comrades and I stopped to warm ourselves at the lighted embers, by which the workmen watched all night, I heard that fatal name die away upon their lips at our approach. But when they recognized us, and were thoroughly convinced that no specter lurked amongst us, they told us stories which would make one's hair stand upon end, and which I will refrain from communicating to you.

I do not mean to infer that the narrative which I am to relate is precisely pleasant and cheerful. I ask your pardon, on the contrary, for sending you to-day a story so gloomy; but with the impression which it made upon me, is mingled something

so comforting, that you will forgive me, I hope for the sake of the conclusions. Moreover, this story has just been told me; you demand one, the occasion is favorable to my indolence or my sterility.

Last week I met Bernard Mauprat, the last of his line; he who proved by the demolition of his manor the horror with which the memories of his childhood inspired him. This Bernard is one of the most respected men in the country; he lives in a pretty house near Chateauroux. Being in his vicinity with one of my friends who knew him, I expressed the desire to see him, and my friend promising me a cordial welcome, conducted me to him at once.

I knew much of the remarkable history of this old man, but I had always wished to learn the details and above all to receive them from himself. It was quite a philosophical problem for me to solve, that strange destiny. I therefore observed his appearance, his manners, and his home, with particular interest.

Bernard Mauprat was not less than eighty years of age, although his robust health, his erect form, his steady step, and the absence of all infirmity made him appear fifteen or twenty years younger. His face would have seemed to me extremely handsome had it not been for an expression of harshness which involuntarily called before me the shades of his ancestors. I strongly believe he did not

resemble them physically. He alone could have told us, for neither my friend nor myself ever knew any of the Mauprats; but it was that which we refrained particularly from inquiring into.

It seemed to us that his servants served him with exceptional promptitude and precision. However, at the slightest sign of delay, he raised his voice, frowned, and muttered several impatient words which gave wings to the laziest. At first I was almost shocked; I thought that style savored somewhat of the Mauprats. But by the kind, almost paternal manner in which he addressed them a moment later, and by their zeal, which differed from fear, I was very soon reconciled to him. Toward us he was extremely courteous, and expressed himself in the choicest terms. Unfortunately, at the conclusion of the meal, a door, which had been carelessly left open, drew from him an oath so terrible that my friend and I exchanged glances of surprise. He noticed our discomfiture.

"Pardon, gentlemen," he said to us; "I see you consider me somewhat irritable; I am an old branch, yet knotty and rude, happily detached from a sorry trunk, and transplanted in good soil. I have had much trouble in arriving at the state of mildness in which you find me. Alas! I would reproach Providence, did I dare, for having meted out to me a life as short as that of other mortals. When to

transform oneself from a wolf to a man, it requires a struggle of forty or fifty years, one should live a hundred years more to enjoy the victory. But of what benefit would that be to me?" he added with an accent of sadness. "The fairy who transformed me, is no longer here to enjoy her work. Bah! it is time to have done!"

Then, turning toward me and looking at me with a strange expression in his glorious black eyes:

"Young man," said he, "I know what brought you; you are curious as to my history. Come nearer the fire, and make yourself comfortable. You cannot please me better than by listening to me. Still, your friend can tell you that I do not speak of myself readily. I too often have to deal with blockheads; but I have heard of you, I know your character and your profession; you are an observer and narrator—that is to say, excuse me—curious, and a scribbler."

He began to laugh, and I endeavored to smile, too, fearing that he was mocking us as I recalled the tricks his grandfather amused himself with by playing upon the imprudent and curious people who came to see him. But he amicably drew his arm through mine, and seated me before the fire, near a table laden with cups.

"Do not be offended," said he to me; "I cannot at my age be cured of hereditary sarcasm; mine

has, however, no trace of ferocity in it. Seriously, I am charmed to receive you, and to confide to you the story of my life. A man, as unfortunate as I have been, deserves a faithful historian who will clear his memory of all reproach. Listen to me, then, and drink your coffee."

I offered him a cup in silence; he refused it with a gesture and a smile which seemed to say: "That is very well for your effeminate generation."

Then he commenced his recital in these words:

MAUPRAT

I

You do not live very far from La Roche-Mauprat; you have often had occasion to pass by those ruins; there is, therefore, no need for me to describe them to you. All that I shall say is that the place has never been as pleasant as it is at the present time. Upon the day when I had the roofing removed, the sun shone for the first time upon the damp walls within which I passed my childhood, and the lizards to which I have ceded them are much better quartered than was I of yore. They can at least see the light of day, and warm their cold limbs in the noon-day rays.

There was a senior and junior branch of the Mauprats. I am of the senior branch. My grandfather was old Tristan de Mauprat, who squandered his fortune, dishonored his name, and was so wicked that his memory is regarded with superstition. The peasants fancy they have seen his ghost appear alternately in the form of a sorcerer and of a white hare, which appears to people meditating some evil

deed. The junior branch was represented, when I came into the world, by M. Hubert de Mauprat, called the chevalier, because he was a Knight of Malta, who was as noble as his cousin was contemptible. The youngest in the family, he had taken vows of celibacy; but being left without brothers or sisters, he renounced his vows and married the year after my birth. Before he contemplated taking a wife he had, they said, endeavored to find in the senior branch an heir worthy of the tarnished name, and capable of caring for the fortune which had accumulated in his hands He had tried to settle his cousin Tristan's affairs, and several times paid his creditors. But seeing that his kindness only served to increase his vices, and that in place of respect and gratitude, he found secret hatred and jealousy, he discontinued his favors; and notwithstanding his advanced age (he was more than sixty), he married in order to have heirs. He had one daughter, and there ended his hopes of issue, for his wife died shortly afterward. He then left the country, and rarely returned to his estates, which are six leagues from La Roche-Mauprat. He was an intelligent and upright man, for his father had educated him in accordance with the spirit of his age. He was bold and daring, and like his forefathers, proudly bore the chivalrous title of Casse-tete. The senior branch had behaved so

shamefully, or, rather, had retained such habits of feudal brigandage, that it had been surnamed Mauprat Coup-jairet (cut-throat). My father, who was Tristan's eldest son, was the only one who married. I was his sole issue. Hubert Mauprat, upon learning of my birth, asked my parents for me, promising, if they would intrust my education entirely to him, that he would constitute me his heir. About that time my father was killed in an accident on the hunting-field, and my grandfather refused the knight's request. Thereupon Hubert married. But when, seven years later, his wife died, leaving him a daughter, the desire which the nobles of the epoch had to perpetuate their name, induced him to renew his offer to my mother. I do not know how she replied; she fell ill and died. My grandfather was with her the last two days she spent in this world.

Pour me out a glass of Spanish wine, for I feel cold. It is nothing—it is the effect which these remembrances produce, when I begin to unfold them. It will soon pass.

He drank a glass of wine, and we did the same, for we too felt chilly as we looked upon his austere face and listened to his abrupt tones. He continued:

I was left an orphan at seven years of age. My grandfather took from my mother's house all the

money and clothes he could carry, then, leaving the rest, and saying that he did not wish to have any dealings with the officers of the law, he did not wait until the corpse was buried, but taking me by the collar he swung me up behind him in the saddle, saying:

"Come, my ward, go home with me, and try not to cry very much, for I have no patience with brats."

Indeed, in a few moments he gave me so vigorous a lash with his whip that I ceased weeping, and, retreating within myself like a tortoise into his shell, I made the journey without daring to breathe.

That night left an indelible imprint upon my memory. At midnight we came to an abrupt halt. My grandfather seized me, bathed as I was in cold perspiration, and tossed me over to a hideous cripple who bore me into the house. That was my Uncle Jean, and I was at La Roche-Mauprat. My grandfather lived there with his eight sons. Civilization rapidly advancing toward revolution was wiping out, more and more, all organized brigandage; the sentiments of social equality were overcoming barbaric customs. In spite of this, my grandfather had for a long time held his ground in the country without meeting with resistance. But having a large family endowed like him, with a fair share of vices, he was finally tormented and beset by

creditors, who were no longer to be intimidated by threats, but who themselves threatened to do him harm.

Then Tristan, rallying his people, withdrew to his castle, and shut himself in with ten or twelve rustics, his servants, all poachers or deserters, who, like him, had an object in retiring from the world (as he termed it) to place themselves behind stout walls for safety.

From that time Mauprat and his children broke the civil as they had broken the moral laws. They had no difficulty in persuading their followers that servitude was about to be re-established, and that the refractory would be ill-used. The peasants hesitated, listened uneasily to those amongst them who advocated independence, and reflected upon it.

The Mauprats promised to all aid and protection, and up to a certain point they kept their word. They received and concealed deserters, they helped to defraud the state by intimidating tax-collectors. It was an easy matter for the Mauprats to pervert the lower classes, for they popularized themselves by contrast with the other nobles of the province who preserved their haughty manners and their ancient dignity. My grandfather did not lose an opportunity of prejudicing the peasants against his cousin, Hubert de Mauprat. While the latter gave audiences to his vassals, he seated in an easy-chair,

they standing with heads uncovered before him, Tristan de Mauprat placed them at his table, and drank with them the wine which they brought him, until the air rang with their drunken revelry. This libertinism achieved the demoralization of the masses. It is unnecessary to tell you what bonds of infamy were established between master and slave; debauchery and bankruptcy were the example and precept of my youth. My companions scoffed at justice, they paid their creditors neither interest nor capital, they thrashed the officers of the law who ventured to serve a summons upon them, they shot at the marshal when he came too near the turret. In the face of all this, my grandfather boasted of his descent and of the prowess of his ancestors; he sighed for the times when the lords of the manors had in their houses instruments of torture, secret cells, and, above all, guns. As for us, we only had pitchforks, cudgels, and one miserable culverin, which my uncle Jean could handle very skillfully.

II

It is time, however, that I should tell you something of myself, and of the development of my mind in the slough in which it pleased Providence to plunge me on leaving my cradle.

I am wrong perhaps to force you to follow me through the first years of my life; I might have said that I was born with a noble organization, with a pure and incorruptible soul. Perhaps there are, and perhaps there are not, incorruptible souls. Neither you nor anyone else will ever know. It is a great question to determine: Are there within us invincible tendencies, and does education modify or destroy them? I dare not say; I am neither metaphysician, psychologist, nor philosopher; but I have had a hard life, gentlemen, and were I a legislator, I should pluck out the tongue or cut off the arm of him who would venture to declare or write that the organization of individuals is fatal, and that one can no more restrain a man's character than a tiger's appetite.

My mother endeavored to instill into my mind noble qualities, although I was too young to derive

much good from her teachings; still, when I was taken to La Roche-Mauprat, I was instinctively repelled by the wickedness around me.

I thank Heaven from the depths of my heart, however, for the ill-treatment heaped upon me, and, above all, for the hatred which my uncle Jean conceived for me. My misfortune rendered me indifferent in the face of evil. That Jean was certainly the most despicable of his race; since a fall from his horse had crippled him, his temper had grown more violent, owing to his inability to do as much mischief as his companions. Compelled to remain at home when the others went on their expeditions, for he could not mount a horse, his only pleasure was to repel those petty, unsuccessful assaults in which the marshal occasionally indulged, as if to ease his conscience.

Owing to my youth, I was unable to follow my uncles to the hunt; so Jean naturally became my guardian and instructor, that is to say, my jailor and my tormentor.

I will not go into details, but for almost ten years, I suffered cold, hunger, insults, imprisonment, and blows, according to the caprice of that monster; his hatred of me sprang from the fact that he could not deprave me—I was proof against his vile seductions. You probably think that, brought up behind the walls of La Roche-Mauprat, and living

in a state of perpetual siege, I had the ideas of the times of feudal barbarism. That which, beyond our walls, was called by other men, assassination, pillage, and torture, they taught me to be combat, victory, and submission. When my grandfather had time to think, he would repeat to me, as a part of my education, legends and ballads of chivalry; and when I questioned him as to the state of affairs at that time, he replied that times had changed greatly; that all the French had become traitors and felons; that the kings had abandoned the nobility who, in their turn, had in a cowardly manner renounced their rights, and allowed the people to make the laws.

I listened with surprise, almost with indignation, to the description of the epoch in which I lived, an epoch to me unaccountable. No books found their way into La Roche-Mauprat, except those brought from the country fairs by our servants.

The names only floated in the chaos of my ignorance, Charlemagne, Louis XI. and Louis XIV., because my grandfather often mentioned them in his comments on the disregarded rights of the nobility.

I, in truth, was not quite sure that my grandfather had not seen Charlemagne, for he spoke of him more frequently than of the others.

Although I admired my uncle's bold deeds and

felt inclined to participate in them, the absence of all principles of morality, the affronts offered to prisoners, women and children, seemed to me only to be explained by their sanguinary appetites.

If Jean saw me turn pale he would say to me with a jeering air: "That is what I shall do to you if you disobey." My blood curdled in my veins, my throat contracted and I fled in order not to re-echo the cries which reached my ears.

The women under my uncle's roof were objects of scorn to those about me; but they caused me strange uneasiness, for I often gazed covetously, at my then age, upon that portion of my uncle's booty, while my heart was divided between a feeling of contempt and delight. My brain was confused, and my nerves unstrung, giving a morbid tinge to my thoughts. My disposition, too, was on a par with the dispositions of my companions, though my heart was better disposed, my manners were not less arrogant, nor my jests in better taste. The consequences of one of my youthful escapades influenced the rest of my life.

III

On the road to Fromenthal, three leagues from Roche-Mauprat, you must have seen, in the heart of the woods, an old tower; at the period of which I am speaking, the Gazean tower, for such was its name, threatened decay; it was the property of the state, which had tolerated there, more from neglect than kindness, a needy old man, living entirely alone, and known in the country by the name of Patience.

—"I have heard my nurse's grandmother speak of him," I replied; "she held him to be a sorcerer."

Precisely; and since we have touched upon that subject, I may as well tell you what sort of a man this Patience was: for I shall more than once have occasion to mention him in the course of my story.

Patience was a rustic philosopher. Nature had endowed him with great powers; but he had had no education, and by a kind of strange fatality, his brain had rebelled against the small amount of instruction he was enabled to receive. He had attended a Carmelite school, but instead of displaying any aptitude, he played truant with more relish

than did any of his comrades. He was eminently contemplative, gentle, and indolent, yet was he proud, while he was independent almost to unsociableness; religious, but opposed to all rules; somewhat of a caviler, mistrustful, implacable to hypocrites. For having expressed his opinion once or twice to the monks, he was expelled from the school. From that time he declared himself openly for the priest of Briantes, who was accused of being a Jansenist. But the priest succeeded no better than the monks in instructing Patience; the young peasant, although endowed with Herculean strength and a thirst for science, exhibited an aversion for all kinds of labor, whether physical or mental. He advocated a philosophy to which it was exceedingly difficult for the priest to reply. One need not work, he said, when one needed no money, and one needed no money, if one only had moderate wants.

Patience was an example of his own philosophy. At the age when love stirs the heart, his code of morals was rigid; he only drank water, never entered a tavern, did not know how to dance, and was always shy and awkward with women, whom, moreover, his quaint character, his stern face, and mocking manner did not please.

He had many enemies, and was looked upon by many as a sorcerer. When I said that Patience

lacked education, I did not express myself well. He was by nature and principle a stoic; the priest did not own the superiority of this uncultivated mind, but he was surprised to pass many a winter evening at his fireside, without experiencing a feeling of weariness or fatigue, while the village schoolmaster and the prior, although knowing Greek and Latin, seemed to him, the one a bore, the other, erroneous. He was aware of the purity of Patience's morals, and attributed the ascendency of his mind to the power and charm which virtue exercises and diffuses.

He humbly excused himself each evening before his Maker for not having talked with his pupil from a more Christian-like stand-point; he confessed to his patron saint that his love of science and the pleasure he had felt as he found himself listened to so religiously, had carried him beyond the limits of religious precepts; he often cited profane authors; he had even taken dangerous pleasure in wandering with his listener through the fields of past ages, there to gather pagan flowers, which the baptismal waters had not sprinkled.

On his side, Patience loved the priest. He was his only friend—his sole bond with society. One morning he embraced him in tears and said:

"I love you alone, in the world; therefore, I do not wish you to suffer persecution on my account.

As, besides you, I love no one, I am going to lead the life of primitive man in the forest."

The priest in vain sought to change his determination. Patience set out, taking with him as luggage only the coat upon his back and an abridgment of the doctrine of Epictetus. The rustic anchorite's destination was the desert, but beset by wolves, he took refuge in a lower room of the Gazean tower, where with a bed of moss and some tree-trunks, he established himself.

Before bringing my character of Patience upon the scene, I must tell you that in the space of thirty years, the priest's mind took another turn. The new sun, which rose in the political horizon and which overthrew all opinions, melted his, as does the first breath of spring the light snow.

The sight of Patience's strange, yet poetical life, which gave him an inspired air, the romantic turn which their mysterious relations took, all seized so strongly upon the priest, that in 1770 he was already far from Jansenism and sought vainly, among all the religious heresies, a loop-hole by which to secure himself, before falling into the abyss of philosophy, so often opened before him by Patience, so often closed in vain by the exorcisms of Roman theology.

IV

It was on a summer's evening, when returning from a bird-catching expedition, upon which several of my young peasant-comrades had accompanied me, that I passed the Gazean tower for the first time. I was about thirteen years old, the tallest and strongest of all, and I exercised upon my companions my seignioral prerogative.

It was growing dark, and we walked gaily along, whistling and imitating the cries of the birds, when he who was ahead of us suddenly halted, and, retracing his steps, declared that he would not take the path leading to the Gazean tower, but that through the wood. His motion was seconded by two others. A third feared we might lose our way on quitting the path, and wolves were numerous in that district.

"Go on, rascal!" I cried in a commanding tone, giving our guide a push; "follow the path, and do not annoy us with your folly."

"Oh," said the boy, "I shall see the sorcerer, and I do not wish to have the fever all the year."

"Bah!" said another; "he is not unkind to every-

one; he will not harm children, and, besides, if we pass along quietly without addressing him, what do you think he will do to us?"

"Oh! it would be all right," replied the first speaker, "if we were alone. But Monsieur Bernard is with us; we are sure to have a spell."

"What do you mean, idiot!" I cried, raising my hand.

"It is not my fault, sir," replied the boy. "This old reprobate does not like gentlemen. He has said that he would like to see Monsieur Tristan and all his sons hung on the same tree."

"He said that? Very well," I returned; "advance and we shall see; he who loves me will follow me; he who deserts me is a coward."

Two of my comrades agreed to accompany me, and the others followed their example; but before we had taken four steps, they fled through the underwood, and I proudly continued on my way, supported by my two acolytes.

Little Sylvain, who was in advance, pulled off his hat when he perceived Patience in the distance, and when we were opposite him, although his head was bent, and he seemed not to heed us, the child, terror-stricken, said in a faltering voice:

"Good evening, Master Patience!"

The sorcerer, aroused from his reverie, started, and I saw a sunburnt face, partly covered with a

heavy gray beard. He was a short man, but broad of chest, and built like a gladiator. A feeling of hatred possessed me, and, determined to avenge the affront offered by him to my name, I put a stone in my sling, and without any preliminaries hurled it with vigor. At that moment Patience was replying thus to the child's salutation: "Good evening, children; God be with you!" when the stone hissed past his ear, and struck a tame owl, a pet of Patience's. The owl uttered a shrill cry and fell bleeding at the feet of his master, who stood motionless with surprise and rage, for several seconds. Then, suddenly seizing the palpitating victim and coming toward us, he cried, in a voice of thunder:

"Which of you rascals threw that stone?"

Sylvain, grasped by the sorcerer's large hand, fell upon his knees on the ground, swearing by the Holy Virgin and by Saint Solange, the patron of Berry, that he was innocent of the bird's death.

I was, I avow, strongly tempted to let him get out of the scrape as well as he could, and to penetrate the thicket. I had expected to see an old, decrepit juggler—not to fall into the hands of a robust enemy; but pride restrained me.

"If it be you," said Patience to my trembling companion, "alas for you, for you are a bad boy, and will become a dishonest man! You have

committed a wicked deed; you have pleased yourself by causing pain to an old man, who has never wronged you, and you have done it perfidiously, in a cowardly manner, by dissimulating and wishing him good evening, politely. You are a liar, an infamous wretch! You have robbed me of my only companion, my only possession, and you glory in my misfortune. May God preserve you, if you are going to continue thus!"

"Oh, Master Patience!" cried the boy, clasping his hands; "do not curse me! do not charm me! do not make me ill! It was not I! May God destroy me if it be I!"

"If it was not you, who was it, then?" asked Patience, taking me by the collar of my coat and shaking me.

"Yes, it was I," I replied haughtily; "and if you wish to know my name, it is Bernard Mauprat, and learn, too, that the villian who lays hands upon a gentleman deserves—death!"

"Death! You would kill me, Mauprat!" cried the old man, petrified with surprise and indignation. "What right has a brat like you to threaten a man of my age with death? Death! Ah! you are truly a Mauprat! You hunt men, miserable dog! Death! you wolf's cub; do you know that it is you who merit death, not alone for what you have just done, but for being the son of your father,

and the nephew of your uncles! Ah! I am content to hold a Mauprat in the hollow of my hand, and to know that a knave of a gentleman weighs as much as a Christian." At the same time he lifted me from the ground as he would a hare. "Little one," he said to my companoin, "go home, and do not fear. Patience never is vexed with his equals, and he pardons his brothers, because his brothers are ignorant, like him, and know not what they do! But a Mauprat, you see, knows how to read and write. Go; but no—stay. I wish for once in your life to have you see a *gentleman* receive a flogging from the hands of a *villain!* You shall see it, and I beg of you not to forget it, little one, and to tell it to your parents."

I was pale with rage. I offered a desperate resistance. Patience with terrible composure fastened me to a tree; he had only to touch me with his large, heavy hand to bend me like a reed, although I was remarkably strong for my age. He hung the owl in a branch above my head, and the bird's blood dripping upon me, filled me with horror. In vain did I threaten him; in vain did I utter vows of vengeance; in vain did my companion fall upon his knees, saying in anguish: "Master Patience, for God's sake—for your own—do him no harm! The Mauprats will kill you!"

He laughed and shrugged his shoulders; arming

himself with a branch of holly he flogged me, I must own, in a manner more humiliating than cruel, for scarcely had he drawn blood when he stopped, threw away his rod, and I noticed a sudden alteration in his face and voice, as if he repented of his severity.

"Mauprat," said he to me, crossing his arms on his breast and looking fixedly at me; "you have been chastised—you have been insulted, my gentleman; I am satisfied. You see that I could have prevented you from ever annoying me again; who would have thought of searching for a noble youth in Patience's retreat? But you perceive that I do not enjoy vengeance, for at the first cry of pain that escaped you I ceased. I do not like to cause suffering. I am not a Mauprat. It was only right, however, that you should yourself experience what it is to be the victim. Good evening; go your way, I no longer want you; justice has been done."

He took up his dead pet and looked at it sadly.

"A peasant's child would not have done this," said he. "This was a *gentleman's* caprice." Then entering his door he uttered the word which escaped him on solemn occasions, and which had given him the name he bore: "Patience, Patience!"

According to popular superstition, this was a cabalistic formula in his mouth, and every time that he had been heard to pronounce it some misfortune

had come to the person who had offended him. Sylvain crossed himself; he was in such haste to fly that he almost forgot to set me free. When he had done so:

"The sign of the cross!" cried he, "for God's sake! the sign of the cross! If you do not make the sign you will be bewitched; we shall be devoured by the wolves on the way home."

"Idiot," said I; "listen: if you ever speak of what happened this evening, I will strangle you."

"Alas, sir! what shall I do?" replied he with a mixture of simplicity and malice. "The sorcerer has commanded me to tell my parents."

I raised my arm to strike him, but my strength failed me. Choked with rage, I almost fainted, and Sylvain took advantage of my condition to make good his escape. When I came to my senses I was alone, two leagues from Roche-Mauprat. It was morning when I reached home; my absence had not been discovered.

V

I had vowed vengeance against Patience in my anger at the indignity put upon me; at a word from me all the Mauprats would have mounted their steeds ready to maltreat the recluse. But I felt an unconquerable repugnance to inciting eight men against one. I was restrained by an instinct of loyalty for which I could not account. Patience's words had, perhaps, unknown to me, awakened within me a sense of justice; however that may have been, I maintained silence. I contented myself with thrashing Sylvain, in order to punish him for having finally deserted me, and to force him to keep secret my misadventure. One day when we were snaring larks, my page came toward me crying:

"I see the wolf-catcher with the mole-catcher!"

That announcement made me shudder. Then I felt a reaction, and walked straight on to meet my sorcerer, somewhat reassured, perhaps, by the presence of his companion, who was a frequent visitor at Roche-Mauprat, and who, I thought,

would treat me respectfully, and render me assistance if necessary.

Marcasse, called the mole-catcher, made his profession that of clearing the houses and fields of the country of martens, weasels, rats, and other obnoxious animals. He did not limit the benefits of his industry to Berry; every year he made the circuit of Marche, Nivernais, Limousin and Saintonge. As regularly as the earth revolved upon its axis he reappeared at certain times in the same places he had visited the preceding year, always accompanied by the same dog and the same long sword. This personage was as odd in his way as the sorcerer was in his. He was a choleric, melancholy man, tall, thin, angular, very slow, and majestic in his manners. He disliked conversation so much that he answered all questions in monosyllables. The attraction he seemed to have for Patience gave rise to the report that there was sorcery beneath his mysterious air and that it was not owing to his dog and sword alone that the moles and weasels disappeared. When I saw that trusty friend, I thought I might brave the sorcerer, and approached him boldly, addressing some remark to Marcasse. Patience, gently pushing aside the mole-catcher, placed his heavy hand on my head and said quietly:

"You have grown, my fine sir!"

The color rushed to my face, and, drawing back disdainfully, I said to him:

"Beware, clown! You should remember that if you still have two ears, you owe them to my kindness!"

"My two ears!" said Patience, laughing bitterly. Then he added: "Patience, Patience; the time is perhaps not far distant when the clowns will not cut off the nobles' ears, but their heads."

"Be silent, Master Patience," said the mole-catcher in a solemn tone; "you do not speak like a philosopher."

"You are right," replied the sorcerer; "indeed, I do not know why I am quarreling with this little lad; he might have had me killed by his uncles, for I flogged him last summer for a trick he played me; and I do not know what has come over the family, but the Mauprats have never, to my knowledge, let slip an opportunity to harm a fellow-creature."

"You must know, peasant," said I to him, "that a noble revenges himself nobly; I did not wish to have my injuries avenged by people stronger than you. But wait two years, and I promise to hang you with my own hand to a tree which stands before the Gazean tower. If I do not carry out my threat, I shall be no gentleman; if I spare you, may I be called a *wolf-catcher*."

At first Patience smiled; then, suddenly becom-

ing serious, he fixed upon me the profound look which rendered his face so remarkable, and turning to the rat-catcher he said:

"It is singular, there is something in this blood; the most wicked are noble; and we are told that we are born to obey them—Patience!"

For a moment he was silent; then he awoke from his reverie, to say to me in a jeering, but not ill-natured tone:

"You wish to hang me, sir stripling! Then eat a great deal of porridge, for you are not tall enough to reach the branch that will bear me."

"Ill said, ill said," said the mole-catcher gravely; "come, peace, Master Bernard; pardon for Patience; he is an old man—a fool."

"No, no," said Patience; "I want him to hang me; he is right—he owes it to me. But do not make too much haste to grow, sir, for I am aging fast; and, since you are so gallant, you would not wish to attack a man who could not defend himself."

"You took advantage of your strength with me!" I cried; "did you not treat me with violence? Speak—was it not cowardly?"

He made a gesture of surprise.

"Oh, those children, those children!" said he, "how they reason! Truth comes from their lips!"

And he walked away, talking to himself as was his custom.

Marcasse doffed his hat to me and said, in an impassive tone: "He is wrong; peace, pardon, peace."

They disappeared, and there ceased my relations with Patience. They were not renewed until some time afterward.

VI

I was fifteen when my grandfather died. After his death, his children, left without any disciplinarian, became greater drunkards and debauchees than they had been. The country round about had been abandoned in consequence of their violence. They went from bad to worse, from brigands to pick-pockets. They would have driven me away had they not feared that I might become a dangerous enemy. A sense of honor alone detained me at Roche-Mauprat. It was evident that a storm was gathering over our heads. The peasants were becoming rebellious, for the doctrines of independence had crept in among them. It was necessary to fly or pass through a decisive crisis. Some counseled the first course, others persisted in following their father's advice and burying themselves beneath the ruins of the keep. They looked upon capitulation or flight as cowardly; the fear of incurring a like reproach and an instinctive love of danger restrained me; but the dislike to so odious a life slumbered within me, ready to burst forth violently.

One evening after supper, we were seated around

the table drinking and talking. My uncles had tauntèd me considerably during the meal about what they called my *virtue*. Having drunk quite freely I became incensed and boasted of being bolder with and more pleasing to the women whom they brought to Roche-Mauprat than they. This defiance was received with roars of laughter. Suddenly a horn sounded at the portcullis. Silence ensued. It was the *fanfare* which the Mauprats employed to make themselves known. It was my uncle Laurent, who had been absent all day and who demanded admittance.

Jean rose; but he halted to listen to a second *fanfare* which announced that he had brought a captive. In a trice all the Mauprats were at the portcullis with their torches; I alone remained behind, somewhat confused by the wine I had taken.

"If it be a woman," cried Antoine, on leaving the room, "I promise you she shall be awarded you, valiant young man, and we shall see if your audacity is on a par with your pretensions."

I rested my elbows on the table plunged in a stupid uneasiness. When the door opened again, a woman entered. It required an effort on my part to comprehend what one of the Mauprats whispered in my ear.

In the midst of a wolf-hunt, in which several of the neighboring lords with their wives were partici-

pating, this young lady's horse had taken fright and run away with her; when the horse was quieted she was a league away from her party, and, not knowing the country of La Varenne, she wandered farther and farther away, the storm and the darkness adding to her perplexity. Laurent, meeting her, offered to conduct her to the castle of Rochemaure, which was indeed more than six leagues distant, but which he represented as very near and of which he pretended to be the gamekeeper.

The lady accepted his offer; she had never seen a Mauprat and did not dream of being so near their den; she had, therefore, followed her guide, without mistrust, and entered the hall of our orgies without the least suspicion of the trap into which she had fallen.

When I rubbed my heavy eyes, and looked upon that woman, so young and beautiful, so frank, so honest, I thought I saw a vision. I almost believed that Morgana or Urganda had come to demand justice, and I had a mind to fall upon my knees and protest my innocence.

Antoine, to whom Laurent had rapidly made an explanation, approached her with as much politeness as he was capable of, begging her to excuse his hunting costume, and the dress of his friends. They were all nephews of the mistress of Rochemaure,

and they were awaiting their dinner until the lady, who was very pious, came from the chapel where she was in conference with her almoner. The air of confidence with which the unknown listened to this absurd fabrication made my heart contract, but I could not account for the sensation.

"I do not wish," said she to my uncle Jean, who listened to her with the air of a satyr, "to inconvenience this lady; moreover, I am very uneasy at causing my father and my friends so much anxiety and cannot remain here. I beg of you to have me brought a fresh horse and a guide, in order that I may return to the place where I presume they are awaiting me."

"Madame," responded Jean, "it is impossible for you to set out in such weather. Ten of our people, well-mounted and armed, are going in ten different directions to scour all the points of La Varenne; it is, therefore, probable that in two or three hours your parents will have news of you, and that they will soon arrive here, where you are well sheltered. So make yourself easy and take some cordial to restore you, for you are wet and fatigued."

"Notwithstanding my uneasiness, I am famished," she replied with a smile, "I will try to eat something, but do not trouble yourself for me; you have already been too kind." She approached the table and took some fruit. I turned and stared impudently

at her; she regarded me haughtily. I could see, however, that although she made an effort to appear calm and to respond with confidence to the hospitality offered her, she was much disconcerted by the unexpected presence of so many strange men, ill-looking and coarsely clad; yet she was not suspicious.

I heard one of my uncles whisper to Jean: "All goes well; she is caught."

"One instant," replied Jean; "the affair is serious; I am going to hold a council; you will be called to give your opinion, but keep watch a little of Bernard."

"What is the matter?" I asked, brusquely; "does not the girl belong to me? Did you not swear to me?"

"Ah, that is true," said Antoine, approaching us, while the others surrounded the lady. "Listen, Bernard; I will keep my word on one condition: that you do not tell the damsel that she is not at Rochemaure."

"But now," said Jean, "I have something to say." When the men left the room, I thought Jean tried to induce Antoine to remain to watch me, but he persisted in following the others. I was left alone with the stranger. For a moment I was stunned, confused, more embarassed than pleased at the tete-a-tete. In my condition I made a mistake in

supposing: *Firstly*, that that well-dressed lady was one of the Bohemians I had occasionally seen at the fairs; *secondly*, that Laurent, having met her on the way, had brought her along to amuse the company; *thirdly*, that they had confided to her my state of boastful intoxication, and that they had brought her to put my gallantry to the test, while they watched me through the key-hole.

I rushed to the door and bolted it; then I turned toward the lady; she was seated at the hearth, occupied in drying her wet garments, and had not seen my action. The strange expression on my face made her start when I approached her. To begin with I was determined to embrace her, but when she raised her eyes to mine that familiarity was out of the question. I merely said to her: "My faith, Mademoiselle, you are charming, as sure as my name is Bernard Mauprat!"

"Bernard Mauprat!" she exclaimed, rising, "you are Bernard Mauprat? In that case alter your tone and remember to whom you are speaking; have they not told you?"

"They have not told me, but I divine it," I replied with a sneer.

"If you divine it, how is it possible that you address me as you have done? Still I have been told that you were uncouth, and for that reason I was anxious to see you."

"Indeed," I sneered. "Come, give me a kiss, my pretty one, and you shall find out if I am as ill-bred as my uncles to whom you listened so politely just now."

"Your uncles!" she cried, seizing her chair and placing it between us as by an instinct of defense; "Oh! my God! I am not at Mme. de Rochemaure's then!"

"The name begins the same and our Roche is as good as hers!"

"Roche-Mauprat!" she murmured, trembling from head to foot. Her very lips turned pale; her features expressed anguish.

I asked myself: "Is she not playing a part? If the Mauprats are not listening will she not repeat to them what has taken place, word for word? Still she trembles like an aspen leaf. Is she an actress?" I was in great perplexity. I turned my wild eyes first on her, then on the doors which I expected would open every moment to admit my uncles.

That woman was as lovely as the dawn; she was tall, poetic, and remarkable for the grace of her movements; she was pale, with black eyes and locks of ebony hue; her eyes and her smile had an expression of delicacy and refinement. Nothing had ever caused her suffering, nothing had ever taught her mistrust. This was the first trial of her

life. She was my cousin, Edmee de Mauprat, daughter of M. Hubert, my uncle, the knight. This meeting was our first; she whom I should have protected at the peril of my life stood before me, trembling like a victim before the executioner. She made one great effort: approaching me, she stated her name, and added:

"It is impossible that you can be a villain like those brigands I have just seen: you are young —your mother was wise and good. My father wished to educate and adopt you; even to this day he regrets that he cannot rescue you from the abyss into which you are plunged. Have you not received several messages from him? Bernard, you are my near relative; think of the ties of blood! Why do you insult me? Will they kill me here, or will they torture me? Why did they deceive me by telling me I was at Rochemaure? Why did they withdraw so mysteriously? What do they propose to do?"

A shot was heard without. Mlle. de Mauprat sank into her chair. I stood by, undecided, not knowing but that it was another scene of the comedy prepared for me.

"Come," said I at length, drawing near the lady; "confess that this is a joke. You are not Mlle. de Mauprat, you only wish to discover if I am capable of making love."

"I swear by the Lord," she replied, clasping my hands with her cold fingers, "that I am Edmee, your relation, your prisoner, your friend, for I have always been interested in you, I have always besought my father not to abandon you. But listen, Bernard, they are shooting! Doubtless my father has come in search of me and they will kill him! Ah," she cried, falling upon her knees, "prevent them, Bernard! Tell your uncles to respect my father, the best of men! Tell them that if they hate us, if they wish to spill blood, to kill me!"

Some one without called me loudly. "Where is the poltroon? Where is that miserable fellow?" cried my uncle Laurent. They shook the door; I had fastened it so that it resisted all their efforts. "The wretched dastard amuses himself by making love while we are being killed! Bernard, the marshal is attacking us; your uncle Louis will be murdered. Come, for God's sake, come, Bernard!"

"What the deuce ails you?" I cried. "I am not so foolish as you think me. I have sworn that I will have this lady and I shall not give her up until it pleases me."

Frightful yells were heard. Laurent left the door and ran in the direction of the noise. I advanced to the door. I could not resist the desire to see what the confusion was about.

"Oh, Bernard! Oh, M. de Mauprat!" exclaimed

Edmee, following me, "let me go with you, I will throw myself at your uncles' feet, I will put an end to this combat, I will give them all I possess, my life if they desire it, so that my father may be spared."

"Wait," said I, turning to her, "I do not know but they may be mocking me. I believe that my uncles are behind the door and that while our servants are shooting they are ridiculing me. If that is not so, if you are indeed Edmee, and if I promise to intercede between your father and those who wish to kill him, what will you promise me?"

"If you save my father," she cried, "I swear that I will marry you."

"Indeed," said I, and emboldened by her enthusiasm, the sublimity of which I did not comprehend, I kissed her icy cheek; she permitted me to embrace her and offered no resistance. Mechanically she followed me. I gently pushed her aside and securely locked the door. I put the key in my girdle and proceeded toward the ramparts armed with my gun. The confusion was owing to an attack by the marshal, and had no connection with Mlle. de Mauprat. The struggle bode fair to become serious; hostilities were several times suspended and resumed.

My uncle Louis was seriously wounded. In the midst of the fray their fair captive was forgotten save by the wily Jean, who tore himself away from

his beloved culverine and glided into the darkness.

A feeling of indescribable jealousy took possession of me. I threw aside my gun and followed him, dagger in hand, ready to stab him if he touched her whom I considered my especial booty. I saw him approach the door, attempt to open it, and then look carefully through the key-hole to assure himself that his prey had not escaped. The shooting recommenced. He turned with surprising agility and ran toward the ramparts. Concealed in the darkness I allowed him to pass, but did not follow him. I was frantic with jealousy. The sight of blood, the noise, the danger, and many swallows of brandy had excited my brain. I took the key out of my belt, and, when I reappeared before my captive, I was no longer the novice she had succeeded in moving; I was the fierce brigand of Roche-Mauprat, a hundred times more dangerous. She ran to meet me impetuously. I opened my arms to receive her; instead of taking fright, she rushed into them, crying: "Well, my father?"

"Your father," said I embracing her, "is not here. Do not worry about him; it was merely an attack by the marshal; as usual we were victorious. What do I care for the officers of the law! Let us live in peace and welcome love!" Uttering these words I raised to my lips a jug of wine which stood on the table; she took it from my hand with an air

of authority: "Do not drink any more," said she; "is what you told me true?"

"It is true; I swear it by your rosy lips," I replied, attempting to embrace her. But she drew back in terror.

"Oh, my God!" cried she, "he is intoxicated! Bernard, Bernard, remember your promise; you know that I am your relative, your sister."

"You shall be either my sweetheart or my wife," I interrupted.

"You are a shameless fellow!" she answered, repelling me with her whip. "What have you done that I should be such to you? Have you assisted my father?"

"I would have done so had he been there, therefore it is just the same! Do you know if I had made the attempt and failed there would not have been at Roche-Mauprat torture cruel and slow enough to punish me for such treason? But I value your good will, my beauty, and would risk anything for you! Come, love me at once, or, by my faith, I will rush to the ramparts, and if I am killed so much the worse for you; you will no longer have a protector, but in his place seven Mauprats for lovers!"

This speech startled her; she rushed to the window and tried to open it, but her efforts were fruitless. I laughed at her vain attempts. For a moment she clasped her hands and stood there

motionless, then suddenly her expression changed; she seemed to have formed a resolution; she advanced toward me with a smiling face and outstretched hands. Her rare beauty affected me strangely; I fell upon my knees before her. She took my head between her dainty hands, crying:

"Ah, I knew you were not one of those reprobates; you will save me! Quickly, let us fly! Shall we leap from the window?"

"What are you saying," I replied, rising; "do you not know where you are? Do you think me a child?"

"I know that I am at Roche-Mauprat, and that I shall be maltreated or murdered in two hours if I do not succeed in arousing your pity! But I shall succeed," she cried, falling in turn upon her knees, "you are not one of this band! You are too young to be a monster like them! You seem compassionate; you will help me to escape, will you not, dear heart?" And she pressed ardent kisses upon my hands. I did not hear her words; I was consumed by a violent passion.

"I see that you are frightened," I said to her. "You are wrong to fear me; I would certainly not harm you; you are too pretty for me to dream of anything but caressing you."

"Yes; but your uncles will murder me," she cried. "Is it possible that you would allow them to kill

me? Since I find favor in your eyes, save me, *then* I will love you."

"Oh, yes, *then*!" I repeated with a mistrustful air, "after you have had me hung by the king's soldiers. Come, prove that you love me *now*; I will save you *afterward*." She showed no anger at my persecutions, but withstood me with gentle words. At length, as to all her entreaties I made the same reply, "Do you love me or are you deceiving me?" she saw with what a brute she had to deal and turning toward me she threw her arms about my neck, hid her face on my bosom and suffered me to kiss her hair. Then pushing me gently from her, she said: "Do you not see that I love you, that I have fancied you from the first?"

"Yes," I answered obstinatery, you have said to yourself: 'Here is a fool whom I can convince of anything; he will believe me and I will have him hung.' There is only one answer that will do if you love me." I took her hands in mine, she could not withdraw them. Suddenly her pale face colored; she smiled and with an air of sweet coquetry, she asked:

"Do *you* love me?" From that moment the victory was hers. I had no longer the power to do as I liked. I believe, as I cried for the first time in my life, "I love you!" my voice had a humane accent.

"Very well," she replied, in a caressing tone, "let us love one another and escape!"

"Yes, let us escape!" I made answer; "I loathe this house and my uncles. But they will hang me, I know."

"They will not hang you," she replied with a smile, "for my betrothed is Lieutenant-General."

"Your betrothed!" I exclaimed, "you are going to be married?"

"Why not?" she replied, gazing at me fixedly.

I turned pale and ground my teeth. "In that case," I began.

"In that case," she repeated, patting me on the cheek, "you are jealous; that is singular jealousy which desires to possess its mistress at ten o'clock and to relinquish her at midnight to seven tipsy men."

"You are right," I cried, "let us go! I will defend you with the last drop of my blood—should I, however, succumb to their numbers, I should perish knowing that you were theirs. But come!"

My fair supplicant kissed me effusively. That caress, the first bestowed upon me by a woman since my childhood, recalled my mother's last kiss; my eyes filled with tears. Observing them the young girl kissed them away repeating: "Save me! Save me! Let us go, I hear them coming! Oh!

if you will not protect me, kill me at once!" She threw herself into my arms.

I pressed Edmee to my breast and said passionately: "You remind me of a turtle dove which, followed by a kite, one day fluttered to my bosom!"

"And you did not deliver it up to the kite, did you?" asked Edmee.

"No, nor will I deliver you up, most beautiful of women, to the miserable night-hawks who menace you."

"But how shall we escape?" she asked.

"Easily," said I, "follow me." I took a torch and, raising a trap-door, we descended into a cellar through which we reached a subterranean passage. When we came to the exit, I extinguished the light and leaning against the door said to the trembling maiden:"You shall not pass out of this place until you promise to be mine. Will you swear by the Gospel, by the name of Christ, by your hope of salvation, by your mother's soul?"

She repeated those words, solemnly adding: "Will you promise me that my vow shall remain a secret between us, that my father shall never find it out, that no one will repeat it to him?"

"No one on this earth. What do I care to nave it known if it be only so!" She administered to me the formula of an oath and we passed on, hand clasped in hand in token of mutual faith. Our

journey was perilous; there was as much danger from the besiegers as the besieged.

In the darkness I had the misfortune to fall; in vain did I urge Edmee to continue her way without me.

"Whatever happens, I will not leave you," she cried; "you are dedicated to me and I to you; we will both be saved or die together."

"If I am not mistaken," I cried, "I see a light through those branches. It is a dwelling." I dragged myself to the door and knocked.

"Who is there?" cried some one from within.

"We are saved," cried Edmee, "it is the voice of Patience!"

"We are lost," cried I, "we are mortal enemies."

"Fear nothing," she said, "but follow me. God has directed us hither."

"Yes, it was God who directed you hither, child of heaven, star of morning," said Patience, opening the door.

By the light of a dim lamp and the brushwood burning on the hearth we saw with surprise that the Gazean tower was honored with unusual company. On one side of the fire-place was a man with a pale, grave face, his form enveloped in the gown of a priest; on the other side sat a lean man in a broad-brimmed hat, with a long rapier across his knees and a dog as large as a rat beside him. The latter

was Marcasse, who rose slowly and touched his hat. The Jansenist priest did likewise. The little dog thrust his head between his master's legs and mute, like him, showed his teeth without barking.

VII

Scarcely did the priest recognize Edmee when he retreated several paces with an exclamation of surprise, which was nothing compared to Patience's astonishment when he had examined my face by the light of the fire-brand, which served him as a torch.

"The dove in company with the bear's cub," he cried, "how did that happen?"

"Friend," replied Edmee, placing her delicate hand within the sorcerer's coarse one, "welcome him as well as me; I was a prisoner at Roche-Mauprat and he rescued me."

At those words Patience took my arm and led me to the fire; he seated me in the only chair and the priest examined my limb while Edmee related our adventures to a certain point and inquired about her father. Patience could not give her any news.

In the meantime Marcasse, followed by his dog, scaled a ladder which served to lead to the upper stories of the tower; he descended with the news that a red glow was visible on the horizon in the direction of Roche-Mauprat. Notwithstanding the

hatred I entertained for the place and its inhabitants, I could not help a feeling of consternation on learning that, to all appearances, the hereditary manor, which bore my name, was taken and in flames. I started up and had it not been for a violent pain in my foot I should have rushed out.

"What ails you?" asked Edmee, who was by my side in an instant.

"I must return to Roche-Mauprat," said I, brusquely, "for my duty is to be killed rather than to leave my uncles to struggle alone with the people."

"The people!" exclaimed Patience, addressing me for the first time, "who speaks of the people here? I belong to the people and I will have them respected."

"My faith! they shall not be by me," said I.

"It would not be the first time," said Patience, with a contemptuous smile.

"You remind me," said I, "that we have old scores to settle." And conquering the pain caused by my sprained ankle, I again rose. Patience stood erect before me, his arms crossed. It was evident that, restrained by the principles of hospitality, he was waiting for me to strike the first blow in order to crush me. I should not have let him wait long, had not Edmee seized my arm saying peremptorily: "Calm yourself, I command you."

I seated myself, saying to Patience: "We shall meet again."

The philosopher's only reply was a shrug of the shoulders.

Marcasse then in his monosyllabic manner censured Patience: "Not at all patient—wrong—yes, wrong!"

"Come," said Edmee, turning to Patience, "I am consumed with anxiety as to my poor father. Good Patience, find me some way of rejoining him with this unfortunate youth, whom I cannot leave to your care since you do not love me sufficiently to be patient with and merciful to him."

"What do you say?" exclaimed Patience, putting his hand to his brow as if awakening from a dream. "Yes, you are right. I am a brute, a fool. I ask the gentleman's pardon for the past; and for the present, place my humble cell at his disposal; is that well said?"

"Yes," replied the priest, "all can be arranged. My horse is gentle; Mlle. de Mauprat can mount him; you and Marcasse can lead him, and I will remain here with our invalid."

When Edmee was seated in the saddle she said to the priest: "Monsieur, will you promise me not to leave my cousin until I return with my father to fetch him?"

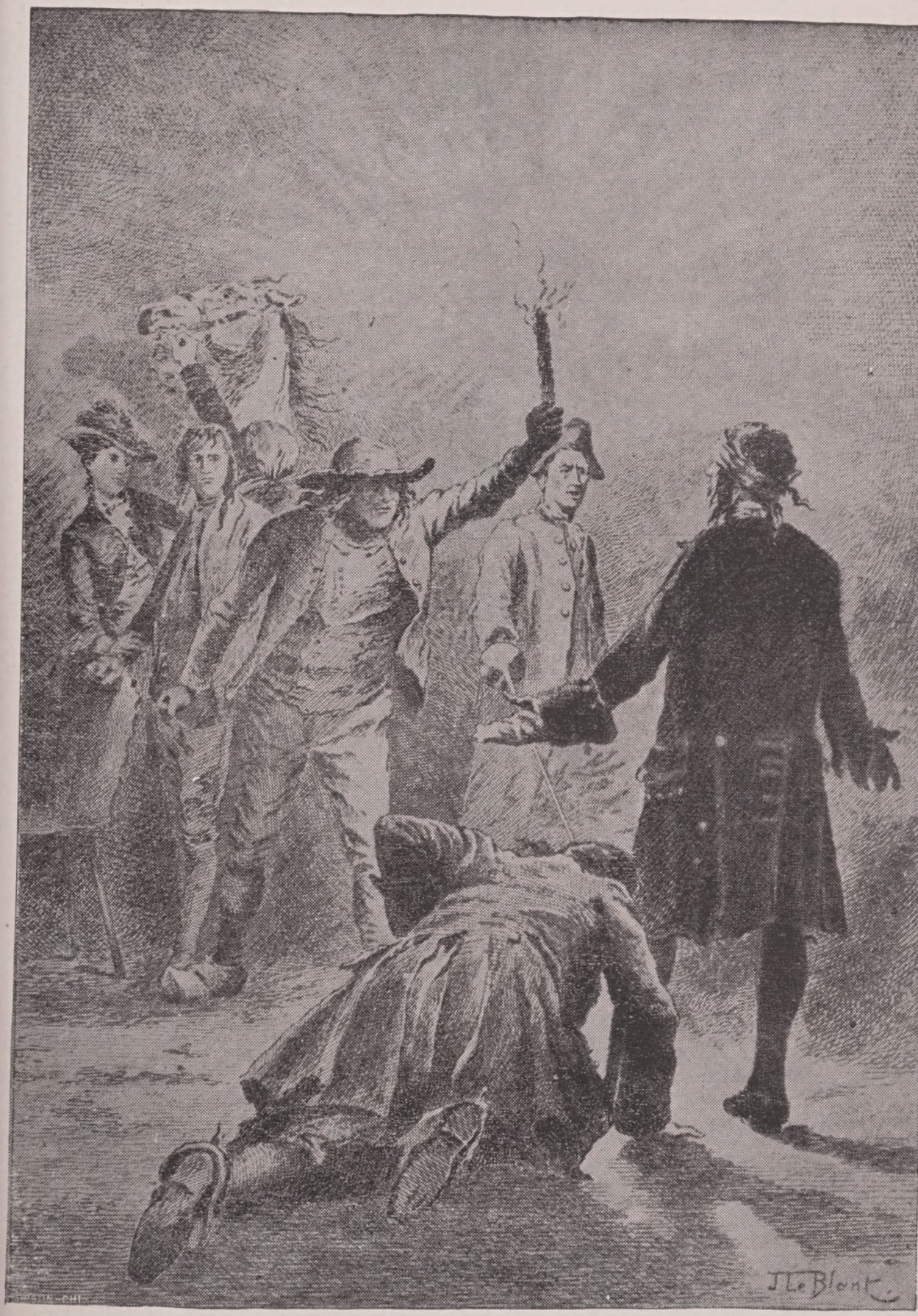
"I promise," replied he.

At that moment the mole-catcher's dog pricked up his ears and showed signs of uneasiness.

"Somebody out there," said Marcasse, laconically, as he courageously advanced sword in hand. Edmee slipped from the saddle and instinctively placed herself behind my chair. Patience rushed out of the tower to find at the door a man covered with wounds from which the blood was streaming. This was my uncle Laurent, who had been mortally wounded at the siege of Roche-Mauprat; with him was his brother Leonard. Patience's first instinct was to place himself on the defensive; but recognizing Marcasse, the fugitives, instead of showing any hostility, asked for shelter and assistance, and no one could have refused them the aid of which their deplorable situation rendered them in need. The marshal was on their track. Roche-Mauprat was in flames. Louis and Pierre had been killed; Antoine, Jean, and Gaucher had fled. Laurent's last moments were too horrible for description; his agony was rapid but frightful. Scarcely had the breath left his body when blows resounded upon the door.

"Open in the name of the King!" cried several voices; "open to the Marshal!"

"To the defense!" cried Leonard, raising his knife and rushing toward the door. "Peasants, show yourselves gentlemen! And you, Bernard, wipe


J.LeBlant

out your disgrace by not permitting a Mauprat to fall into the hands of the gendarmes alive!" I was about to follow him when Patience seized him and with Herculean strength hurled him to the ground and placing his knee up on his breast called to Marcasse to open the door. Six gendarmes entered.

"Here, sir," said Patience, "do not harm anyone, but take this prisoner. Had I been alone with him I should have defended him or helped him to escape; but there are people here who must not suffer for a knave like this, and I do not care to expose them to the dangers of an encounter. Here is the Mauprat whom it is your duty to deliver into the hands of justice. The other is dead."

"Sir, surrender!" said an officer, laying hold of Leonard.

"Never will a Mauprat degrade his name in a court of law," replied Leonard gravely; "I surrender, but you shall only have my body." While they were preparing to bind him, he said to the parson: "One single, one last boon, father. Let me drink from your gourd; I am dying of thirst and exhaustion." The good man handed him the gourd which he drained at a draught. He seemed vanquished, incapable of resistance. But, at the moment they were about to bind his feet, he snatched a pistol from the belt of one of the gendarmes and blew out his brains. I then became

the subject of discussion: One of the officers claimed to recognize in me a Mauprat Coup-jarret (cut-throat). Patience, however, maintained that I was one of M. Hubert de Mauprat's game-keepers, escorting his daughter to her home. I was about to tell my name when Edmee glided to my side, her face as pale as death, her lips contracted by a terror so great that at first she could only express herself by signs. The officer, touched by her youth, listened deferentially, when she succeeded in giving him an explanation. She finally induced him not to treat me as a prisoner, but to conduct me with her to her father's castle, where, she pledged her word, satisfaction should be given. So we set out; Edmee on the officer's horse, I upon the priest's; the latter and Patience on foot between us, the marshal at our rear; Marcasse in front, as usual impassive, while two gendarmes remained at the tower to guard the corpses.

VIII

We penetrated about a league into the forest, halting at every branch of the road to call, in case the hunting party should be in the vicinity. By the way, the gendarmes told us that Roche-Mauprat had been taken: that two Mauprats had been killed and that five escaped, two of them to die as we have just seen.

Suddenly the sound of horns and the baying of dogs announced the approach of a band of huntsmen. Edmee, impatient to join her father and rising above the terrors of that night of bloodshed, spurred on her steed and reached them first. When we rode up I saw Edmee in the arms of a tall man with a venerable face; his elegant attire and his fine Norman horse, held by a groom, led me to believe myself in the presence of a prince. The caresses he lavished upon Edmee were so new to me that perforce I looked upon them as extravagant and unbecoming, and felt a pang of jealousy, for I did not suspect that such a man could be my uncle. Edmee spoke in a low tone and eagerly. In a few moments the old man advanced toward

me and greeted me cordially. Then a tall, young man with a handsome face and as elegantly attired as M. Hubert, approached and pressed my hand, addressing to me words of thanks which I did not understand. He next turned to the gendarmes and I discovered that he was the Lieutenant-General of the province, for he required them to permit me to follow my uncle to his castle, where he would be responsible for me.

I was surprised to see the knight on friendly terms with Patience and Marcasse. As for the priest he was on a footing of equality with both gentlemen. All that affection of which Edmee was the object, that devotion which I could not appreciate, those cordial and peaceful relations between respectful plebeians and kindly patricians, seemed to me like a dream. But my brain began to whirl when the train was once more in motion; the Lieutenant-General (M. de la Marche) pushed his horse between Edmee's and mine, and took his place, as if by right, at her side. I remembered that she had told me at Roche-Mauprat that he was her betrothed. Hate and anger possessed me, and I do not know what absurdity I should have been guilty of had not Edmee, seeming to divine my turbulent feelings, said that she wished to speak with me, and regained me my place near her.

"What have you to say to me?" I asked with more eagerness than politeness.

"Nothing," she replied in a whisper, "I shall have much to say to you later; until then will you do as I wish?"

"And why should I do as you wish, cousin?"

She hesitated a moment and, making an effort, she said: "Because thus it is that one proves to women one's devotion."

"Do you think then that I do not love you?" I asked abruptly.

"How do I know that you do?" she said. That doubt astonished me very much, and I tried to combat it in my style.

"Are you not pretty?" said I, "and am I not a young man? Perhaps you think I am a child and cannot appreciate beauty in woman. But I am now more deeply in love with you than ever! The more I look at you, the handsomer I think you. Indeed—"

"Be silent," said she, sharply.

"Oh, you fear that that gentleman will hear me," said I, pointing to M. de la Marche. "Make yourself easy; I can keep my word and I hope you will keep yours."

At that juncture we reached the castle gates; Edmee whispered to me: "Promise me that you will love my father, that you will listen

to his counsel, that you will do nothing without consulting him. Promise me that, if you wish me to put faith in your friendship!"

"My friendship!" I repeated. "My love! I promise anything that will please you—and you, will you not promise me something in return?"

"What can I promise you that is not yours?" she said gravely, "you have saved my honor—my life is yours."

On dismounting, Edmee sank into her father's arms in a swoon. M. de la Marche assisted M. Hubert in carrying his daughter to the house. I was conducted to a magnificent room, in which a meal, such as I in my barbaric state had never dreamed of, was served. A valet stood behind my chair, ready to attend to my slightest wish, and somewhat blunted the keen edge of my appetite. On retiring, finding myself without arms and hearing people coming and going around me on tip-toe, I was again rendered suspicious, and, taking advantage of a moment when I was alone to rise and snatch from the table the longest knife I could find, I returned to my bed more at ease, and fell asleep clutching it tightly. When I awoke I saw a kind and venerable face gazing at me through the hangings, and M. Hubert de Mauprat inquired as to my health. I tried to be polite and grateful, but the expressions of which I made use were so different

from his that I felt a sense of embarrassment steal over me. To add to my confusion the knife that I had taken to bed fell at his feet; he picked it up, looked at it and then at me with extreme surprise. I colored and stammered I knew not what. I expected censure for the insult offered to his hospitality, but he was too courteous to remark upon it; quietly laying the knife on the mantel-piece and returning to my side he spoke thus:

"Bernard, I know now that you saved the life I hold dearest in the world. My gratitude and esteem are yours; my daughter also owes you a debt; therefore, be not uneasy as to your future. I know to what persecution and vengeance you have exposed yourself by coming to us, but I know, too, from what a horrible life my friendship and devotion will save you. You are an orphan; I have no son. Will you accept me for your father?" I stared at the knight in surprise; I could not trust my ears, nor could I reply. The knight himself experienced some astonishment; he had not expected to find a nature so uncultivated. "Come," said he, "I hope you will feel at home here. Merely give me a shake of the hand to prove that you have confidence in me. I will send you your servant; ask anything of him that you wish, he is yours. I have only one promise to exact from you; it is that you will not go beyond the park inclosure until I have taken

measures to render you safe from the pursuit of the law. They might reflect upon you the accusations of guilt which your uncles' conduct has incurred."

"My uncles!" said I, putting my hand to my head; "have I had a bad dream? Where are they? What has become of Roche-Mauprat?"

"Roche-Mauprat has been saved from the flames," he replied; "several of the adjoining buildings were destroyed, but I shall undertake to restore your home and to buy back your fief from the creditors to whom it to-day belongs. With regard to your uncles, you are probably the sole heir of a name which it behooves you to redeem. Four Mauprats died in one night; the fifth, Gaucher, was found this morning in the pond; the remaining two they have not yet found. If they are still alive, they dare not reappear, for there would be no hope for them; since they have brought this trouble upon their own heads, it is better for them and for us, who have the misfortune to bear the same name, that they died with arms in their hands rather than to suffer ignominious deaths on the gallows. Let us pray for them, Bernard, and try by noble deeds to remove the blots imprinted by them on our escutcheon. This is not the time to recriminate against those who at this hour may be standing before God's tribunal; but they have done me an irreparable injury; they have broken my heart.

What wrong they have done you shall be made right, I swear to you by your mother's memory. They have deprived you of education, they have associated you with their lawlessness, but your soul has remained as noble and pure as that of the angel who gave you birth. You shall make amends for the involuntary errors of your childhood, you shall receive an education conformable with your rank, and shall retrieve the family honor. Had you been intrusted to my care in early youth you would have been brought up with my daughter and would certainly have become her husband. But Providence did not will it so: she has already made her choice in M. de la Marche; has she not told you?" The caresses and tender words of the honorable old man had awakened a new disposition within me; but when he uttered the name of his future son-in-law all my savage instincts were aroused and I felt that no principle of social loyalty could force me to renounce my claim upon her whom I considered mine. I grew pale, I colored, I choked. We were happily interrupted by M. Aubert (the Jansenist) who had come to post himself as to the results of my fall. When the knight discovered that I was hurt, he sent forthwith for his doctor; the attention paid me seemed absurd, yet I submitted to it from a sense of gratitude. I made so bold as to ask the priest for Edmee. He said she had a high fever

and they feared a serious illness; her strength during her trials had been taxed to its utmost and the reaction was violent in comparison.

I, on my part, was a prisoner, too. I could not take a step without the greatest agony, and the physician said, if I did not remain quiet a few days, I would have to keep my room for months. The close confinement, to which I was unaccustomed, became insufferable to me at the end of twenty-four hours. To no one could I communicate my feelings. I was rendered very uncomfortable by the politeness paid me from the master of the house to the least of his servitors; it was to me a language which I understood, but could not speak. I, however, found the faculty of retort when the priest, having told me that he was to superintend my education, questioned me as to what I knew. My ignorance was such that I was ashamed to reveal it to him, and my rude pride aroused, I informed him that I was a gentleman and had no desire to become a priest. He laughed, tapped me gently on the shoulder, and said that in time I would change my opinion, but that I was a comical fellow.

I was purple with rage when the knight entered. The abbe repeated to him our conversation. M. Hubert suppressed a smile. "My child," said he, affectionately, "do not let us speak of studies to-day. Before conceiving a taste for them you must realize

their necessity. You have a noble heart; the desire for knowledge will come of itself. Let us sup. Are you hungry? do you like good wine?"

"Much better than Latin," I replied.

The wine was so excellent that, according to my custom at Roche-Mauprat, I soon became tipsy.

I believe that my uncle and the priest encouraged me in order to draw me out; undoubtedly they augured well in the main, for they continued in their persuasions as to my education with a zeal which bespoke hope. The knight's kindness won my heart rapidly; my love for him was on a par with my ardent devotion to his daughter. I did not think of matching one of those sentiments against the other. I combined the passions of a man with the mind of a child.

IX

Finally, one morning after breakfast, M. Hubert led me to his daughter's room, which was simple but charming, while the air was scented by the perfume emitted from flowers, disposed about the department in vases. African birds warbled sweetly in a gilded cage; the carpets were as soft as moss. My sight grew dim, I stumbled awkwardly.

Edmee was reclining upon a couch, holding, nonchalantly, in her hand a mother o' pearl fan. She extended her hand to me; I did not hear her words distinctly, but I believe they were affectionate. Then, as if overcome by fatigue, she threw back her head ånd closed her eyes.

"I have work to do," said the knight to me; "keep her company, but do not make her talk too much, for she is still very weak."

My uncle passed through a door at the end of the room and closed it again. I gazed upon Edmee as she lay there; she was not like the same Edmee; she was so pale, so delicate. The peculiar pleasure I felt in contemplating her was interrupted by the entrance of a person called Mlle. Leblanc, who

fulfilled the functions of waiting-maid in the bedroom and of companion in the drawing-room. Perhaps she had received orders from her mistress not to leave us; at any rate she seated herself near the couch, drew her work from her pocket, and calmly began to knit. In a short time I noticed that Edmee was no longer asleep, but was conversing in low tones with her maid who examined me stealthily from time to time. To avoid her glances I rested my head upon the table as if asleep. Then by degrees they raised their voices and I heard what they said about me.

"Mademoiselle has chosen a strange page."

"Leblanc, you amuse me with your pages; who has pages in these days? I tell you, he is my father's adopted son."

"But where did he find the fellow? He looks more like a bear, a badger, a wolf, a kite, like anything, rather than a man," continued Leblanc. Why since he has been polished up he is nothing to what he was with his smock frock and leather gaiters when he came; he was enough to frighten one. If his hair was dressed he would look better," continued the duenna, "but Saint-Jean told me that when he was about to put on the powder, he rose, furiously saying: 'Anything but that flour! I wish to be able to move my head without coughing and sneezing!' Lord, what a savage!"

"Well, in the main he is right; if Fashion did not authorize that absurdity, everyone would look upon it as ugly and inconvenient. Is it not much nicer to have black hair? Moreover children do not wear powder, and this boy is still a child."

"He is an ogre! He would eat children for his breakfast! But whence comes this fellow? What is his name?"

"Curious woman, I have told you his name is Bernard."

"Bernard what?"

"Nothing, at present. What are you looking at?"

"He sleeps like a dormouse! Look at the numskull! I think he looks like monsieur; perhaps he is some relation, perhaps a slip."

"Come, Leblanc, you are going too far."

"Well, has not monsieur been young like every one else?"

"Undoubtedly; but listen: do not attempt to tease the young man; perhaps you have guessed aright; my father requires him to be treated as a son of the house."

"If Mademoiselle is satisfied, what has it to do with me?"

"Ah, if you were thirty years younger!"

Their conversation was interrupted by the knight who entered in search of a book.

"Mlle. Leblanc is here," he said calmly. I

thought you were tete-a-tete with my son. Well, have you chatted together, Edmee? Have you told him that you would be his sister? Are you satisfied with her, Bernard?"

My replies could compromise no one. M. de Mauprat returned to his study, and I reseated myself, hoping that my cousin would dismiss her duenna and talk to me; but my hopes were not realized. Edmee seemed to be really asleep. At dinner-time her father came for me, and before leaving her room he said to her again: "Well, have you talked?"

"Yes, dear father," she replied, with an assurance that confounded me.

At times I was troubled as to her conduct toward me while in her room, but hope returned as I recalled the tone in which she had spoken of me to Mlle. Leblanc. I waited in uncertainty; the days and nights succeeded one another without any explanation being offered, or any secret message reaching me. When she was in the drawing-room she gave me no opportunity to address her. My uncle, seeing that I was wearying of the state of captivity in which I was forced to live, would say: "Go and talk with Edmee; go to her room—tell her that I sent you." But I knocked in vain; the door was never opened to me. I was desperate—furious.

It is necessary that I should interrupt this recital to tell you what was taking place at this time in the Mauprat family.

Jean and Antoine had fled; although they were pursued, it was impossible to obtain possession of their persons. All their goods were seized, and the sale of the fief of Roche-Mauprat was ordered by law. But the sale did not take place. M. Hubert de Mauprat stopped the suit; the creditors were satisfied, and the titles to the property passed into his hands.

The day upon which M. Hubert made the purchase, he entered my room, accompanied by his daughter and the priest, and showing me the papers, informed me that I should be put in possession at once, not only of my part of the inheritance, but of the greater part of the income. At the same time, the entire estate would be assessed to me by the Knight's will, *on one condition:* that I would consent to receive an education suitable to my station; my uncle was not prepared for resistance on my part.

"Uncle," I replied, after having listened in absolute silence, "I thank you for your kindness, but I cannot accept it. I do not want fortune; to a man such as I am, bread only is necessary. A gentleman knows enough if he can fell a teal and sign his name. I do not long to be Lord of Roche-Mau-

prat; it is enough to have been a slave there. You are a noble man, and I love you; but I do not like conditions. Nor should I consent to accept a portion of my cousin's fortune. I know she would gladly sacrifice it to free herself."

Edmee here cast upon me a burning glance and interrupted me with: "To free myself from what, if you please, Bernard?"

I replied with a dart of malice: "To free your self, cousin, from a certain promise made at Roche-Mauprat!"

"What promise did you make, Edmee?" asked her father. As he spoke the priest grasped my arm, and I knew that my cousin's confessor was in possession of our secret.

"She promised," said I with a smile, "to look upon me as her brother and friend: were not those your words, Edmee, and do you think that can be proved by money?"

She rose quickly, and extending her hand said in a trembling voice: "Bernard, you have a noble heart, and I should never forgive myself were I to doubt it an instant!"

The knight embraced me, while the priest said several times: "That is good! that is noble! One need not learn that from books," he added, addressing the knight. "God writes his word and diffuses his spirit in the hearts of his children."

"You will see," said the knight, deeply moved, that this Mauprat will redeem the honor of the family! Now, my dear Bernard, I will not speak to you again of business: but you cannot hinder me from doing that which I think is right! Come, Abbe, the carriage is waiting to take us to the solicitors. You, children, can breakfast together."

At the table the presence of Saint-Jean restrained me from speaking upon the subject nearest my heart. I spoke of Patience, and asked Edmee how it happened that she was on such terms of intimacy with him. She told me the story of the rustic philosopher, with whose natural intelligence and wisdom she had been favorably impressed. In fact, he had relapsed his habits for some time, and often paid her visits.

"I cannot read much better than Patience," I said to her; "I wish you would take as much pleasure in my society." At that moment we left the table, and I was delighted to think I could come to some understanding with my cousin on reaching the drawing-room. There, to my disgust, however, we found M. de la Marche; in my heart I consigned him to perdition. He was a typical young man of the period; a disciple of the new philosophy—a Voltairian—a great admirer of Franklin.

We went into the garden, through which ran a pretty stream; when we reached its brink we found

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DeBlant

that the boards on which we generally crossed had been swept away by the storms of the preceding day. I seized Edmee in my arms and crossed with her. M. de la Marche, not wishing to appear more dainty than I was, did not hesitate to enter the water in his fine clothes and to follow me with bursts of laughter somewhat forced. Edmee did not laugh. I think that in giving her that proof of my strength and boldness she was startled at the thought of the love with which she inspired me. She was vexed, and said to me when I placed her gently on shore:

"Bernard, I beg of you never to do such a thing again."

"Ah, you are angry!" said I. "But look at that man! I cannot gather violets, but believe me, in danger you may give me the preference."

I had hoped M. de la Marche would be jealous; on the contrary, he laughed gayly at the pitiable condition of his dress, and complimented me on my exploit. Edmee was sad and preoccupied; it seemed an effort for her to treat me kindly.

The knight and the priest returned in time for dinner. They conversed in low tones with M. de la Marche about the settlement of my affairs, and from the few words I overheard I inferred that my future was to be assured in the brilliant manner described to me that morning. I did not under-

stand such generosity. I mistrusted a stratagem to separate me from my cousin. Edmee remained sad and passive; she retired soon after dinner; her father followed her anxiously.

"Have you not noticed," said the priest to M. de la Marche, "that Mlle. de Mauprat is very much changed of late?"

"She is thin," replied the Lieutenant-General; "but I think she is as pretty as ever."

"Yes; but I fear that she is more indisposed than she will own," replied the priest: "Her disposition is changed, as well as her face; she is melancholy."

"Melancholy? Why, it seemed to me she has never been as gay as she was this morning—is it not so, Bernard?"

"There is something strained and forced about her gayety," said the priest; "and suddenly she will lapse into a state of melancholy which I never noticed before that night in the forest."

"Indeed, she witnessed a horrible scene at the tower," said M. de la Marche, "and her horse's mad gallop must have frightened her. Tell me, M. Bernard, when you met her in the forest, did she seem very much frightened?"

"In the forest?" I repeated; "I did not meet her in the forest."

"No, it was at La Varenne you met her," said the priest hastily. "By the bye, M. Bernard, will

you permit me to say a word to you relative to your property of—" He dragged me out of the room and said in a low voice: "I beg of you not to let any one suspect, not even M. de la Marche, that Mlle. de Mauprat was for one second at Roche-Mauprat."

"Why not?" I asked. "Was she not under my protection? Did she not leave there, pure thanks to me? Can you conceal the fact that she was there two hours?"

"It can be concealed; dead men tell no tales, and I adjure, in the name of her father, of the friendship you bear her and which you avowed in so noble, so touching a manner this morning."

"You are very adroit, sir," said I, interrupting him; "all your words have a hidden meaning which I divine though I am ignorant. Tell my cousin she may rest easy; tell her I will not interfere with her marriage; that I only ask one boon of her—that is the promise of *friendship* she gave to me at Roche-Mauprat. I see that you fear M. de la Marche will forsake her should the adventure be disclosed; if that gentleman is capable of insulting and suspecting Edmee, it seems to me that there is a means very simple by which all could be set right!"

"And that is—"

"To challenge and kill him!"

"But Bernard," said the priest, "think of your cousin's love for M. de la Marche!"

"Yes, that is all the more reason," I cried brusquely.

The priest's part was a difficult one: he had received, under the seal of confession, a confidence to which he could only make indirect allusion in speaking with me. By means of these allusions he hoped to make me comprehend the enormity of my obstinacy and to lead me to submit. He made a miscalculation; so much virtue was beyond my strength as it was beyond my comprehension.

X

For several days Edmee plead indisposition and left her room very rarely. M. de la Marche called every day; his castle was not far distant. I took more and more of an aversion to him notwithstanding the politeness he overwhelmed me with. I was somewhat comforted by seeing that he was not admitted to Edmee's apartments. The principal event of that week was the installation of Patience in a cabin near the castle. Edmee had won his heart and in offering him the small dwelling belonging to her father, situated in a picturesque ravine at the end of the park, she had done so with such tact and delicacy as not to wound his sensitive pride. It was indeed to complete this negotiation that the priest had gone to the Gazean tower with Marcasse on the night upon which, detained by the storm, they had given shelter to Edmee and me.

The horrible scene that followed our arrival, put an end to Patience's irresolution; after that nothing could have induced him to spend another night there. He followed us to Saint-Severe and soon his philosophical scruples were overcome byEdmee's

seductions; the cottage placed at his disposal was humble enough not to cause him to blush for his apparent connection with civilization.

Here the narrator again interrupted his story to enter into the development of Mlle. de Mauprat's character.

Edmee, said he, was one of the most perfect women in France. She had no desire to shine in society, she was happy in her family. She ignored her worth as I ignored it at that time when with sensual eyes I only perceived her beauty. Her betrothed understood her no better. He had developed his ideas in the cold school of Voltaire and Helvetius; Edmee had brightened her intellect by means of the glowing declamations of Jean-Jacques.

The time arrived when I understood her, but the time never came when M. de la Marche understood her. Edmee, deprived during her infancy of her mother, had molded herself. The priest to whom her education was intrusted did not proscribe the writings of those philosophers by whom he had been seduced. Edmee admired the poets equally with the philosophers and on her walks always had a volume in her hand. She would explain to Patience several subjects from Tasso and other poets, and he would reproduce them in his peculiar style. It was a veritable pleasure to note the effect

of poetical beauty on that puissant organization. He became familiar through us with Homer and Dante. His initiation into the world of poetry marked an epoch of transformation in his life. He understood love and saw in the starry sphere all the gods of Olympus, the fathers of primitive humanity; he read in the constellations the story of the Golden and Iron Ages; he heard in the wintry wind the songs of Morven and greeted in the stormy clouds the specters of Fingal and Comala. Before knowing the poets, he said in his later years, I was like a man lacking in intellect. After knowing them I found that that intellect was required that I might comprehend that which had perplexed me and destroyed my peace of mind. Then he would wander into language peculiar to himself, abounding in metaphors.

At the period that I thoroughly understood Patience, between him and me there was a sympathetic bond. Like him I had been uneducated, like him I had attained the explanation of great problems. Thanks to fortunate conditions of birth and wealth, I reached a high state of development while Patience was still struggling with the shadow, though I had to own the superiority of that mighty organization wrestling by the aid of feeble, instinctive glimmerings.

At the time to which my story refers, however,

Patience was, to me, merely a grotesque personage, an object of amusement to Edmee and of charitable compassion to Father Aubert. When they spoke to me of him I fancied they were demonstrating to me the advantages of an education, the necessity of applying myself in good season. Often as I rambled in the woods, I would see Edmee seated on the threshold of the humble cottage, a book in her hand, while Patience listened to her, his arms crossed, his head bowed upon his breast. I considered then that Edmee was absurd to burden herself with the impossibility of teaching him to read. I did not succeed in obtaining a tete-a-tete with her in that way for she was always accompanied by the priest or her father; finally my patience was exhausted. I found no means of forgetting my disappointment but by drinking hastily at supper; when after the meal she left the room, she first kissed her father, gave her hand to M. de la Marche, and passed me, saying coldly, "Good-night, Bernard!" which plainly said: "To-day has ended like yesterday, and to-morrow will end like to-day."

I remained ensconced in my easy-chair until the fumes of the wine were dissipated, when I would stroll into the park, revolving in my mind absurd dreams and sinister projects. One evening at supper she looked at me fixedly several times with an odd expression; on leaving the table she said to me

in a low voice, quickly and imperiously: "Cease drinking, and learn all that the abbe teaches you." Her tone of authority, instead of influencing me aright, aroused my anger. I met her upon the staircase as she was ascending to her chamber.

"Do you think," said I to her, "that I am going to be your dupe; that I have not noticed that for a month you have not addressed a word to me—that you have treated me like an inferior? You have lied to me, and now you scorn me for having been silly enough to believe your word."

"Bernard," said she coldly, "this is not the place nor hour for an explanation."

"Ah, I know that according to you there will never be a time nor place; but I shall find both, never fear. You have told me that you loved me; you have cast your arms about my neck, and sworn by all you held sacred to be mine, all because you feared me, and now you avoid me lest I should claim my rights. But you will gain nothing by it; I promise you that you shall not trifle with me much longer."

"I shall never be yours," she said in a voice which grew more and more icy, "if you do not change your language, your manners, and your thoughts. As you now are, I do not fear you. If you were kind and generous I might submit to you. Study, mend your ways, and we shall see."

"Very, well," said I, "I understand that promise, and shall act in accordance with it. If I cannot be happy, I can at least be revenged!"

"Take all the revenge you please," said she; "it will only make me scorn you more." Uttering those words she drew from her bosom a paper, which she held to the flame of the candle.

"What are you doing?"

"Burning a letter I wrote you," she replied. "I wished to make you listen to reason, but it is out of the question; one cannot reason with brutes."

"You shall give me that letter!" I cried, attempting to snatch it from her; but she cast the light upon the ground and made her escape in the darkness.

I followed her in vain. She reached her room and drew the bolt. I descended to the garden. My anger was succeeded by profound sadness. Edmee, proud and defiant, seemed to me more desirable than ever. I felt that I had offended her; that she did not love me—that probably she would never love me again. Overcome by grief, I buried my face in my hands and sobbed. The dull sound of my stifled sobs attracted the attention of a person praying in the chapel, on the other side of the wall against which I was leaning. A painted window was directly above my head.

Who is there?" inquired a voice, and looking up,

I saw Edmee's pale face lighted up by the oblique rays of the moon. On perceiving Edmee I attempted to depart, but she passed her pretty bare arm through the grating and seized me by my collar, saying, "Why are you weeping, Bernard?" I submitted to that gentle violence, half ashamed of having allowed the secret of my weakness to be surprised, half enraptured to find that Edmee was not insensible to it.

"What is your trouble?" she continued; "what can draw from you such sobs?"

"You scorn, you hate me, and you ask why I suffer, why I am angry?"

"Are you crying for rage?" she asked, withdrawing her arm.

"For rage, and perhaps for sorrow; the fact is, my heart is broken. I must leave you, Edmee; I cannot remain here."

"Why not? Explain yourself, Bernard; now is the time."

"Yes, with a wall between us; I suppose you are not afraid of me! Ah, I have been told that all women are false!"

"Who told you that? Your uncle Jean, your uncle Goucher, or your grandfather Tristan?"

"Make game of me if you will! But sometimes, methinks, they told the truth!"

"Do you wish me tell you why they thought

women false? Yes? Because they used violence and tyranny to beings weaker than they. Each time they inspired fear, they ran the risk of being deceived. When you were a child, and Jean struck you, did you never avoid his brutal correction by deceit?"

"Yes; that was my only resource!"

"Cunning is the resource of the oppresed; do you not know that?"

"I know that I love you, and that there was no reason for you to deceive me."

"Who says that I have? You have deceived me. You professed to love me; you do not. I loved you because I saw you divided between detestable principles and a generous heart, inclined toward justice and honesty. And I love you now because I see that you have triumphed over evil, and that your wicked inspirations are followed by tears from a contrite heart. Then there are times when you seem to me so far beneath yourself that I cannot recognize you, and that I think I cannot love you. It depends upon you alone, Bernard, that I do not ever doubt you nor myself."

"What must I do?"

"Correct your bad habits, listen to good counsel, open your heart to moral teachings. You are uncultivated, but you may be sure that it is neither your awkwardness at making a bow nor your igno-

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rance of paying a compliment which turned me against you. On the contrary, it would be in my eyes a great charm if noble sentiments were hidden beneath this rudeness; but your sentiments and your ideas are like your manners. I know, however, that it is not your fault, and if I see you ready to correct your weaknesses, I will love you as much for your defects as your good qualities. I do not love evil, and if you cultivate instead of extirpating it, I can never love you."

"I do not think there is evil in me. I was set a bad example in my childhood, but I did not imbibe such precepts. I never took pleasure in committing misdeeds, nor in causing others suffering. I loathed money, of which they made an idol at Roche-Mauprat. Now that I can do as I wish, whom do I injure? Come, confess, Edmee, you do not think me wicked; but I do not please you because I am not learned, and you love M. de la Marche because he can utter nonsense at which I should blush."

"If to please me," said she with a smile, and without withdrawing her hand, which I had taken through the grating, "to be preferred to M. de la Marche it is necessary to acquire knowledge, as you say, will you not do it?"

"Perhaps I would be fool enough, for I cannot comprehend the power you have over me."

"You have more feeling and intelligence than any one thinks. No matter what I say to you in a moment of anger, I cherish for you an esteem and friendship which will endure as long as life lasts. The blood of the Mauprats does not flow as tranquilly as that of other beings; you who know that so well, must make allowances for my pride. Never tell me that I am forced to love you, for love cannot be governed; but bring it about so that I may always love you."

"Why are you intrenched behind these bars?" I asked, covering with kisses the wound I had made upon her arm a moment before in my frenzy. "Miserable grating! Edmee, if you would bend your head I could kiss you—kiss you as a sister."

"My dear Bernard," she replied, "in the world in which I live they do not even kiss sisters, and never secretly. I will kiss you every day before my father, but not here."

"You will never kiss me!" I exclaimed angrily. "And your promise? My rights!"

"If we marry," she said with embarrassment; "when you have received your education."

"Are you mocking me? Is it a question of marriage between us? I do not want your fortune, I have told you!"

"My fortune and yours are one," she replied; "between relatives so closely allied as we are, the

words' 'yours' and 'mine' have no significance. The thought never occurred to me that you were covetous. I know that you love me, that you will prove it to me, and that the day will come when your love will no longer inspire me with fear, because I will be able to accept it in the sight of God and man."

"If that is your idea," I said, "my position is very different; but, to tell you the truth, I must consider it. I did not think you meant it thus."

"What else could I have meant?" she asked. "Does not a maiden disgrace herself by surrendering herself to any other man than her husband? I do not wish to bring dishonor upon myself, nor would you, who love me, wish it; you would not do me an irreparable wrong unless you were my mortal enemy."

"Listen, Edmee! I can tell you nothing as yet of my plans, for I have never had any with regard to you—the very thought of you inflamed my brain! You want me to marry you? Why?"

"Because I could not honorably be yours without that; do you not understand? No? Well, education will teach you. You could not expect me to take for a husband a man guided by instinct alone."

"Yes, I understand that—you could not submit your life entirely to an animal of my species! But

I do not ask it of you! I cannot think of it without trembling!"

"But you must think of it, Bernard! Think it over well, and you will realize the necessity of following my counsel."

She gently withdrew her hand from mine, and I think she said "Good-night," but I did not hear it. I was absorbed in my thoughts, and when I raised my head to speak to her, she was no longer there.

My conversation with Edmee had transported me into a new world. I wandered through the park, a prey to a thousand uncertainties. The night was magnificent; I felt its sweet influence; Edmee's image danced before me on the paths, no longer exciting those transports which had devoured me. It seemed to me that for the first time I gazed upon the moon, the hills, and the fields. At times I was impelled to fall upon my knees and offer up a prayer to the Almighty, but I knew not how to address Him and feared I might offend Him by my prayers.

The moon was so bright that I could distinguish the tiniest flower clearly. A small marguerite seemed to me so beautiful with its white collar fringed with purple, and its golden chalice filled with sparkling dew-drops that gathered and covered it with kisses, crying in ecstatic madness: "It is you,

Edmee; yes, you are here. You no longer fly from me!" What was my embarrassment when, on raising my eyes, I found that my folly had been witnessed. Patience stood before me. He smiled.

"Well, well," said the recluse calmly, "do you think I do not understand? I am not so simple, nor am I so old that I cannot see clearly. Who hides among the yews when Edmee is seated at my cottage door? Who follows me like a young wolf when I take her to her father's house? What harm is there in it? You are both young, you are both handsome; you are both related, and if you so desire, you can become as worthy and as honorable a man as she is a maiden."

My wrath vanished on hearing Edmee's name on Patience's lips. We walked along side by side. He walked slowly, his hands behind him. He often interrupted his conversation to say, pointing to the starry vault: "Look at that; is it not grand?" He was the only peasant I ever saw who admired the heavens—or at least the only one who ever expressed his admiration.

"Master Patience," I said to him, "you say I could become an honorable man if I would; you think then that I am not one?"

"Do not be angry," he replied. "Patience has the right to say anything; is he not the fool of the castle?"

"Edmee pretends that you are its sage, on the contrary."

"Does she, the pure child of God? Well, if she thinks so, I will act like a sage, and give you some good advice, Master Bernard Mauprat. Will you listen to it?"

"It seems that every one here takes upon himself to counsel. It matters not, I will listen."

"You are in love with your cousin!"

"You are very bold to ask such a question."

"It is not a question, it is a statement; and now, I tell you, win your cousin's love and become her husband."

"Why do you take such an interest in me, Master Patience?"

"Because I know that you merit it."

"Who told you so—the abbe?"

"Not a word."

"Edmee?"

"A little—and that she is not in love with you, is your own fault."

"How is that, Patience?"

"Because she wishes you to receive an education, and you will not. Ah, if I were your age—if all whom I met were willing to instruct me—if they said to me: 'Patience, this is what must be done to-day; Patience, this is what must be done to-morrow'—I should be satisfied. But I have to

pierce into the shadows for myself, and I shall die before I learn one-tenth of what I wish to know! I have, too, another reason for wanting you to marry Edmee."

"What is it, good Master Patience?"

"It is that La Marche may not have her; he is no man; he smells like a flower-garden—but I prefer a sprig of wild thyme."

"My faith, I have no love for him either; but if my cousin loves him—eh, Patience?"

"Your cousin does not love him; she believes him to be good, she believes him to be true—she is deceiving herself, and he is deceiving her. I know he is a man who has no heart—who pretends to be charitable, but allows the poor to die of starvation at his very castle gates. How different is he from Edmee! You love her because she is beautiful, like a field daisy; I love her because she is good and pure. She is a generous maiden who deprives herself to give to the needy. Her mother was the same; for I knew her when she was young. I knew your mother too; she was a model woman—you resemble her, they say!"

"Alas, no!" I replied; "I know neither charity nor justice."

"You have as yet been unable to practice them, but they are written in your heart, I know. Take courage, Mauprat. Follow the abbe's advice—it

is good. Try to please your cousin—she is a star in the firmament. Recognize truth; love the people, detest those who detest them; be ready to sacrifice yourself for them. Listen to what I say—make yourself the friend of the people!"

"Are the people, then, better than the nobility? Since you are a sage, Patience, tell me truly."

"The people are better than the nobility, because the latter oppress them and they suffer their oppression. But they will not always submit. You see those stars? They will not change, they will be in the same place and will shed as much light ten thousand years from to-day; but there will soon be changes on earth. The poor man has endured a great deal; he will turn against the rich man—castles will fall and lands will be laid waste. I shall not see it, but you will. There will be ten cottages instead of this park, and ten families will live on its revenues; there will be no more servants, nor masters, nor lords; there will be nobles who will yield only to force, as did your uncles, as will M. de la Marche, notwithstanding his fine talk. Then it will be well for Edmee if she has for her husband a *man*. It will be well for Bernard Mauprat to know how to push a plough and to kill game, for old Patience will be sleeping beneath the turf in the cemetery, and will not be there to render Edmee the services she may require. Do not scoff

at what I say, young man! It is the voice of God speaking through me. Look at the heavens; the stars live in peace, and nothing disarranges their eternal order; the large ones do not swallow up the lesser—not one encroaches upon its neighbor; the time will come when the same order will reign among men; the mean ones will be swept away. Strengthen yourself, Monsieur Mauprat, in order that you may do battle and shield Edmee—Patience, who wishes you well, warns you!"

We had, during this speech, reached Patience's cottage; with one hand resting on the railings of his small inclosure, gesticulating with the other, he talked with energy. His eyes glowed, his brow was bathed in perspiration; there was something about him like the prophets of old. As we stood there, I felt a return of the superstitious terrors of my youth, and a vision rose before me of the sorcerer hanging above my head—the maimed owl.

XI

When I awoke, the following morning, the incidents of the preceding day seemed to me like a dream. I had not yet arisen when I heard the patter of M. de la Marche's horse's hoofs on the court-yard flags. Instinct bade me yield that day to an impetuous inspiration. I dressed hastily. I entered the drawing-room pale and excited. Edmee too was pale. She was seated by the fire-place; M. de la Marche was reading a newspaper at the other end of the room. Seeing Edmee so dispirited, my anger vanished. I approached her, seated myself beside her, and gazed upon her tenderly.

"It is you, Bernard?" she murmured, without opening her eyes.

It was the fashion of that day for ladies to wear elbow-sleeves. I perceived upon Edmee's arm a bandage, and raising the lace upon her sleeve, I pressed my lips gently upon the wound I had made. M. de la Marche might see me. I longed to quarrel with him.

Edmee started and blushed, then she said: "Truly, Bernard, you are very gallant this morning! Did

you not compose a madrigal last night?" Her tone of raillery disconcerted me, but in my turn I replied with assurance: "Yes, I composed one last night at the chapel window, and if it be poor, cousin, it is your fault!"

"Say rather the fault of your education," replied Edmee sharply.

Just then M. de la Marche approached us. I was prepared to insult him, but he did not perceive it, and turned to Edmee, addressing to her some remarks in a low voice.

"I have too severe a headache to remain here," said she at length, rising. "Give me your arm to my room."

She leaned upon my rival's arm, and they left the room together.

I sought the park, my refuge in all my troubles, and cast myself upon the grass, trying to invent some plausible excuse by which to throw myself upon my enemy and strangle him. In my perplexity, the dinner-hour slipped by, and dreading Edmee's brusque remarks and the priest's cold glances, I resolved not to return until night, and fell alseep where I lay.

I was awakened by the sound of voices. Behind the foliage Edmee's voice pronounced my name; at first I almost fancied I was dreaming, then I held

my breath and listened. It was she, with the abbe, on her way to visit the recluse.

"I fear," said Edmee, "that he will cause trouble, perhaps very serious trouble, with M. de la Marche. You don't know Bernard."

"He must be sent away at any price," replied the priest; "you cannot live thus, continually exposed to his brutality."

"Since he has been here I even sleep with bolted doors—and see, abbe, I carry a poignard, like a heroine in a Spanish ballad."

"Edmee, we must find some means to alter this state of affairs. I can conceive that you do not wish to deprive him of your father's friendship by telling him all; but if— Ah, Edmee, I am not a blood-thirsty man, but twenty times a day I deplore the fact that my calling forbids me to disembarrass you of him forever."

On hearing that charitable regret, I felt impelled to rush forth and put the priest's war-like humor to the test, but I was restrained by a desire to learn Edmee's true sentiments and designs with regard to me.

"Listen to me," resumed the priest, "we cannot speak of this before Patience; do not let us close this conversation without having come to a decision."

"I am listening, my excellent friend," said Edmee; "advise me."

"My dear child, I am the only one who can give you counsel, and you must speak to me frankly as to your confessor. Answer me, then—do you not regard as impossible a marriage between yourself and Bernard Mauprat?"

"How can that which is inevitable be impossible?" cried Edmee. "I have given him my vow by all I hold sacred."

"I will never countenance, as your priest, such an absurd and deplorable union! You the wife and slave of a cut-throat!"

"Do you think he will beat me?"

"If he does not kill you!"

"Ah, no!" replied she; "I would kill him first!"

"Your father, God be praised, will not consent to this marriage; he has given his word to M. de la Marche, and you have given yours; that promise only is valid."

"My father will gladly consent to a union that will perpetuate his name and live. As for M. de la Marche, he will release me without my taking the pains to ask him, when he finds that I spent two hours at Roche-Mauprat; there will be no need of any other explanation."

"He would be unworthy the esteem I bear him,

if he would believe your name sullied by an unhappy adventure from which you issued unscathed."

"Thanks to Bernard," said Edmee, "for I do owe him gratitude; his behavior was noble and inconceivable in a brigand such as he was."

"I should like to have an explanation with him, to try to make him comprehend that honor demands that he free you from your promise; if he be not a brute, he will realize his folly. Absolve me from the secret imposed upon me, authorize me to speak to him, and I promise you success."

"I know you would not succeed," said Edmee; "moreover, I would not consent to it. No matter what Bernard is, I wish to act honorably toward him; if I were to do as you advocate, he would have reason to believe that I had treated him infamously."

"Very well: there is one last resort—it is to trust to M. de la Marche's honor and wisdom; if he forsakes you, you can escape from Bernard's persecutions by entering a convent."

"I have thought of that, but it is not yet time."

"Certainly not; we must first obtain M. de la Marche's opinion; if he be the man I judge him, he will protect you and distance Bernard, either by persuasion or authority."

"What authority, abbe?"

"The authority of the sword."

"An encounter between those two men is just

what I desire to avoid—what I will avoid, should it cost me my life or my honor. I should loathe M. de la Marche were he to provoke to a duel that poor, ignorant boy. How could you have such thoughts? You must dislike the unhappy fellow very much! And I should have him killed by my husband as a reward for having saved me at the peril of his life! No, it shall not be. He is my cousin, a Mauprat—almost like my brother. He shall not be driven from this house; I would leave it myself rather."

"Those are very generous sentiments, Edmee; and with what warmth you express them! Did I not fear to offend you, I should tell you that this solicitude for young Mauprat suggests to me a strange thought."

"What thought?" asked Edmee abruptly.

"Since you ask me, I will tell you. It is that you seem to take more interest in the young man than in M. de la Marche."

"Which needs that interest the most?" asked Edmee with a smile; "is it not the hardened sinner whose eyes have not seen the light?"

"But, Edmee, you love M. de la Marche, do you not?"

"If by *love*," said she seriously, "you mean to have confidence in a person and friendship for that person, then I love M. de la Marche; if you

mean to have compassion for and an interest in another, then I love Bernard. But I feel that the only person I love with passion is my father, and the only thing I love with enthusiasm is my duty. I wish the lieutenant was not so attentive, for it will give me pain to tell him I cannot become his wife; still I do not doubt but that M. de la Marche will be easily consoled. I am not jesting, abbe. M. de la Marche is a cold man—his affections are not deep."

"If you do not love him any more than that, so much the better; and yet, noting this difference, I have lost my last hope of seeing you escape Bernard Mauprat."

"Do not grieve, my friend; either Bernard will be aroused to a sense of loyalty and friendship and improve himself, or I will escape him."

"How?"

"Through the convent door or the cemetery gate. Come," she added, "God will aid us; it is impious to doubt Him in time of danger. Are we atheists that we are so easily discouraged? Let us go to Patience, he will reassure us; he is the oracle who solves all questions without knowing anything."

They passed on, leaving me dismayed. Nothing could calm my sorrow, nothing could excite my anger; she loved neither M. de la Marche nor me.

She appeared to me in a new light; she was no longer the lovely young girl whose presence stirred my very soul, but a young woman of my own age, bold, courageous, inflexible on the point of honor, generous, capable of deep friendship. From that moment my love was changed from a passion to a purer affection. I determined to be gentle and submissive.

When I reached home I entered the pantry to obtain some food, for I was faint. While I was there Edmee came in with some cherries; on perceiving me she uttered a scream and dropped the fruit.

"Edmee," said I, "I beseech you not to fear me any more; that is all I can say, for I do not know how to express myself."

"You can tell me another time, dear cousin," she replied, trying to smile, but she could not conceal the fear she felt in finding herself alone with me. I made no attempt to detain her—I felt her mistrust deeply. As she was leaving the room I burst into tears. Edmee stopped on the threshold, and in the kindness of heart, suppressing her fear, she approached me and said, "Bernard, you are unhappy; is it my fault?"

I did not reply; I was ashamed of my tears, which I endeavored to control.

"Come, tell me what ails you!" cried Edmee, venturing to place her hand upon my shoulder,

while the tears trickled down her cheeks. I fell upon my knees and tried to speak, but could only articulate the word "to-morrow," several times.

"To-morrow! why to-morrow? Are you not contented here? Do you wish to go away?"

"I will go if you wish it," I managed to reply. "Tell me, do you never wish to see me more?"

"I do not wish it; will you not remain here?"

"Command me," I replied. She looked at me in great surprise. I remained upon my knees.

"I am sure that you are good; a Mauprat can be nothing by halves. You will lead a noble life when the inspiration comes to you."

"It has come!"

"Indeed?" said she joyously.

"On my honor, Edmee; dare you give me your hand?"

"Certainly," and she extended to me a trembling hand. "You have then made good resolutions?"

"I have made such that you will never have cause to reproach me! Now go to your rooms, Edmee, and do not bolt the door; you need no longer fear me—my wishes shall be yours."

At the door she turned and said affectionately: "You must rest too; you are fatigued, you are sad; if you do not wish to grieve me, take care of yourself, Bernard." In her eyes was an indefinable ex-

pression, a mixture of mistrust and hope, affection and curiosity.

"I will take care of myself; I will rest; I will not be sad—"

"And you will work?"

"I will work! Edmee, will you pardon me for all the sorrow I have caused you, and love me a little?"

"I will love you very much if you are always as you are to-night."

The next day I sought the priest. "Monsieur Aubert," said I, "you proposed several times to give me lessons. I have come to ask you to put into execution your kind offer." I had spent a portion of the night in preparing that speech. I felt very bitter against him; for though I knew that I merited all the evil he had said of me to Edmee, it seemed to me that he might have dwelt a little upon my good qualities which had not escaped him. I conducted myself as would a gentleman to an inferior. I was very attentive, very polite, and very cold. When I had taken my first lesson I saw in his keen eyes the desire to replace that reserve by a sort of intimacy; but I did not countenance it. Upon going down to breakfast I saw that Edmee knew of the fulfillment of my promise. She gave me her hand first, and called me her dear cousin several times during the meal,

while M. de la Marche's face plainly betrayed surprise.

I made rapid progress in my studies. At the end of a month I could express myself with ease and write well. Edmee took an interest in my work, and I was stimulated and encouraged. However, the change in my life and habits, the lack of physical exercise, the strain upon my mind, brought on a nervous malady, and for some weeks I was delirious.

One night, during one of my lucid moments, I saw Edmee in my room. At first I thought it a dream. I rose; feeble, scarcely able to move, I tried to leave my bed. Patience approached and gently prevented me. Saint-Jean was sleeping in an easy-chair. Every night two men watched by my bedside. Seizing Patience's hand, I asked him if that was Edmee's corpse lying in the chair.

"It is the living Edmee," he replied in a low voice, "but she is asleep, my dear sir; do not awaken her. If you require anything, I am here to attend to your wants."

"Dear Patience, you are deceiving me; she is dead, and so am I; you are here to bury us. Put us in the same coffin, for we are betrothed. Where is the ring? get it and put it on my finger. Our wedding-night has arrived!" I persisted in my wild fancy, and Patience, fearing a violent outbreak,

gently took a ring from Edmee's finger and slipped it on mine. When that was done, I pressed a kiss upon it, crossed my hands upon my breast and fell asleep. The following day, when they attempted to take the ring from me, I became furious. As I dozed the priest took it from my finger; on awaking I missed it. Edmee, who was in the room, ran to my bedside and replaced it, addressing several reproachful words to the priest. I grew calm at once, and raising my dim eyes to hers I said:

"Are you not my wife as much after death as during life?"

"Certainly," said she; "rest in peace."

She bent over me and kissed me. I fell asleep, my hands in hers, repeating at intervals, "The tomb is blessed—death is blissful!"

During my convalescence Edmee was less demonstrative, but just as assiduous. I begged of her to let me keep the ring, and she consented. When I asked Patience for M. de la Marche he replied:

"He has gone!"

"Gone? For a long time?"

"Forever, if God so wills it. I know nothing about it, for I ask no questions; but I chanced to be in the garden when he took his leave—it was as cold as a December night! Mauprat, Mauprat! they say you have become a great student. Remember what I have told you—when you grow old there

will perhaps be neither titles nor manors; perchance they may call you Father Mauprat as they call me Father Patience, although I have never been a monk nor the father of a family!"

"What are you aiming at?"

"Remember what I have told you," he repeated. "I consent to your marriage with your cousin; continue in the right way."

"Be silent, Patience! You give me pain; my cousin does not love me."

"I tell you she does! I know how she nursed you, and when you were so ill I saw her on her knees in her room at five o'clock in the morning."

In proportion as I grew stronger, Edmee became more prudent; her visits were shortened, and when I could leave my room, I only spent a few hours each day with her, as before my illness. I was in the same terms with her as I had been. M. de la Marche was in Paris; according to her statement, he had been called thither on business, and would return at the end of the winter. She did not hint at any rupture; she spoke of him naturally and without any reticence. I was again rendered uncertain.

"I will force her to prefer me," I determined.

I plunged into my studies and astonished the priest by my aptitude. The care he had taken of me during my illness had disarmed me, and although

I could not cordially like him, I showed him more regard than I had in the past. His long conversations were very instructive. I took rambles with him, and together we paid visits to Patience's snow-covered cottage. That was a means of meeting Edmee. My conduct was such that she no longer feared me, but I had no opportunity of proving my heroism, for the priest followed us closely.

As my education advanced and my preceptor praised my wonderful gifts, I developed a vice which until then had lain dormant—the vice of vanity. I became as talkative as I had once been silent. I fancied myself a man—a wonderful man. I would enter into arguments with my uncle, who was imbued with many prejudices; he had received a good education in his day, but times had changed. He, however, would brook no contradiction, and as he had not the gift of expressing himself, his natural impatience was augmented. When Edmee ventured to express an opinion, even against her convictions, to help her father out, he would cry:

"Let him talk, Edmee; you need not interfere. Did you not always interrupt, I would prove to him his absurdity!"

"*The proof*" always terminated in his leaving the room to cool his ire; in the course of an hour he returned as good-natured as ever.

Edmee was much concerned at the development

of that defect in my character, and treated me as gently and kindly with regard to it as a mother.

After many conferences with the priest, she resolved to persuade her father to move to Paris during the last weeks of the carnival. Her father had no will but hers. I trembled with delight at the thought of seeing Paris.

We set out one lovely March morning; the knight with his daughter and Mlle. Leblanc in a post-chaise; I in another with the priest, who very illy concealed his joy at visiting the capital for the first time in his life, and my valet, Saint-Jean, who bowed low to every passer-by, in order not to forget his habits of politeness.

XII

That epoch marked a new phase in my life. I spent most of my time with the priest; at dinner we all met; in the evening we went out. At first I was filled with admiration for everything, but in a few weeks I passed from an excess of admiration to an excess of disdain. That you may obtain some idea of the history of that time, I will just mention that the War of Independence had broken out in America; that Voltaire received his apotheosis in Paris, and that Franklin, the prophet of a new political religion, had sown even in the heart of the French court the seeds of republicanism.

A friend of M. Turgot's, the knight had not mingled with the gilded youth of his day, and his world was composed of grave lawyers, old soldiers, and several lords from the country, who, like him, had come to spend a short time in Paris. Still he had acquaintances in the gay world, where Edmee's beauty and refinement were soon remarked. She was sought after by great ladies, and soon the small drawing-room which she had chosen for her father's old friends was not spacious enough to accommodate

the great wits and ladies with philosophical hobbies who desired to become acquainted with the "Young Quakeress," the "Rose of Berry"—names bestowed upon her by the fashionable world.

Edmee's social success did not turn her head; she possessed wonderful control over herself, and admirable good sense pervaded all her words and actions. In strong contrast to her were the women the most admired in society. I felt ill at ease when near them, and it required many lectures from Edmee to prevent me from betraying my contempt for what is called in worldly parlance their "coquetry," "amiability," and "grace." The priest was of my opinion, and when the drawing-room was cleared, before retiring we would cross swords with my uncle and cousin on that subject.

Edmee alone retained her frank sincerity, her natural grace. Seated on a sofa near M. de Malesherbes, she was the same person I had watched so many times seated in the waning light of the setting sun on a stone bench on the threshold of Patience's cottage.

XIII

My perplexity was increased—the hope of gaining Edmee's affection by submission and devotion had failed me. Though she had bade me remain, though she interested herself in my studies, when I betrayed by word or look my love for her, she became distant and cold. In the meantime many wooed her, but none were accepted. It was rumored abroad that she was engaged to M. de la Marche, but they could not account for the marriage not taking place except by the fact that she loved me better.

My singular history was known. The ladies regarded me with curiosity; the men took an interest in me, which I affected to scorn, but which pleased me nevertheless. I was introduced to Franklin as a sincere lover of liberty; Sir Arthur Lee honored me with some good counsel. My head was turned like the heads of those I had railed against. I took pride in not powdering my hair, in wearing heavy boots, in appearing everywhere in the simplest attire. I was nineteen, and lived in a time when every one had peculiarities—that is my only excuse.

Spring arrived; we were preparing to return to the country; the drawing-rooms were thinning out, and I was still in the same uncertainty. I noticed one day that M. de la Marche showed an inclination for a tete-a-tete with Edmee; at first I took a delight in remaining unmovable in my chair, but seeing upon Edmee's forehead the slight frown I understood so well, after a mute consultation with myself, I left the room determined to learn the issue of their conversation, and to learn, too, my fate, whatever it might be.

At the end of an hour I returned; my uncle was in the room. M. de la Marche remained to dinner. Edmee was pensive and sad. The lieutenant accompanied my uncle to the Comedie Francaise; Edmee said she had letters to write and asked to be permitted to remain at home. I followed the two men, but after the first act I stole away and hastened home.

I entered the drawing-room, fearing lest Edmee might be in her room—thither I could not have followed her. But I found her near the fire-place, amusing herself by picking to pieces the blue and white asters I had gathered at the grave of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Those flowers recalled to my mind the only hours of perfect happiness I could remember in my life.

"Home so soon?" she said.

"'So soon' is an unkind word," I replied; "would you like me to go to my room, Edmee?"

"No; but you would have profited more by the representation of Merope than by talking to me this evening, for I warn you that I am stupid."

"So much the better, cousin; for the first time we will be on a footing of equality. But why, may I ask, are you treating my asters with such contempt? I thought you would guard them as relics."

"I am playing an interesting game," said she; "do not disturb me."

"I know it," said I to her. "All the children at La Varenne play it, and all our shepherdesses believe in its revelations. Shall I interpret for you?"

"Yes, great necromancer!"

"A *little*, means that some one loves you; *very much*, that you love him; *passionately*, that another loves you; *not at all*, that is how you love that other."

"And can you tell, sir wizard, who that *some one* and *another* are? I believe you are like the witches of old—you do not yourself know the meaning of your oracles!"

"Can you not guess, Edmee?"

"Yes," said she, throwing aside the flowers; "I love M. de la Marche *a little;* I love you *very much;* he loves me *passionately;* you do not love me at all! That is the truth!"

"I pardon your interpretation with all my heart

on account of the words 'very much,' " I replied, attempting to seize her hand, which she drew away. I felt emboldened, however, I knew not why, and ventured to make some remarks relative to her tete-a-tete with M. de la Marche. She took no pains to deny my accusations, but smiled provokingly. Her manner was beginning to irritate me, when a servant entered and handed her a letter, saying that some one was awaiting a reply.

"Mend me a pen, please," she said to me. With a nonchalant air she broke the seal and glanced through the note, while I prepared the writing materials. Pen and paper were placed in readiness, but Edmee made no use of them. The open letter lay upon her knee, her feet rested on the fender, her elbows on the arms of her chair. She was wrapt in thought. I spoke to her softly. She did not hear me. I thought she had forgotten the letter and was asleep. In a quarter of an hour the servant returned and asked if there was a reply.

"Certainly;" she said, "tell him to wait."

She re-read the letter and began to write slowly; then she threw her reply into the fire, pushed back her chair, took several turns in the room, suddenly stopped before me and looked at me severely and coldly.

"Edmee," I cried impetuously, "what ails you? what connection can that letter have with me?"

"What does that concern you?"

"What does it concern me? What is the air I breathe to me, the blood that flows in my veins? Ask me that, but do not ask me how one of your words, your glances affects me, for you know my life depends upon them!"

"Do not utter such nonsense, Bernard," said she, returning to her chair absently; "there is a time for everything!"

"Edmee, Edmee, do not tamper with a sleeping lion; do not rekindle the flame that smolders beneath the ashes."

She shrugged her shoulders and began to write again. Her color came and went, and from time to time she ran her fingers through her curly locks; she was dangerously beautiful. She seemed to be in love—but with whom?—with him to whom she was writing?

I left the room and entered the ante-chamber. I looked at the man who had brought the letter—he wore M. de la Marche's livery. That enraged me. I re-entered the room and closed the door noisily after me. Edmee did not turn her head; she continued writing. I seated myself opposite her; I glanced at her with glowing eyes; she did not deign to raise hers to mine. Finally she sealed her letter; I arose and approached her.

"Edmee," said I bitterly, with what was meant

as a caustic smile, "do you want me to hand that letter to M. de la Marche's lackey and to whisper in his ear at what hour his master may meet you?"

"It seems to me," she replied with an equanimity which exasperated me, "that I have named the hour in my note, and that it is unnecessary to inform the servant of it."

"Edmee, you might spare me a little," I cried.

She threw down the letter she had received and left the room to deliver her reply herself to the messenger. I did not know if she meant me to read that letter, but the desire to do so was irresistible. It was to this effect:

"EDMEE: I have at length discovered the fatal secret which according to you has placed an insurmountable barrier between us. Bernard loves you; his manner this morning betrayed him; but you do not love him, I am sure—that is impossible! You should have told me frankly; I have succeeded in finding out that you spent two hours in the brigand's den! Unfortunate woman, your prudence, your supreme delicacy, ennoble you in my eyes! Why did you not tell me at first? I should with a word have allayed your fears! I would have helped you to conceal your secret. I would have sympathized with you, or rather I would have effaced the odious memory by tokens of love.

However, all is not lost. Edmee, I love you more than ever—more than ever I am determined to share with you my name; deign to accept my offer."

This note was signed "Adhemar de la Marche."

Scarcely had I finished reading it when Edmee returned; she seemed uneasy. I handed her the letter; she took it with an absent air, and leaning over the grate, she seized a charred paper which the flames had not consumed. It was her first reply to M. de la Marche's note.

"Edmee," I implored, falling upon my knees, "let me see that paper. Whatever it may be, I will submit to the sentence dictated by your first motive."

"Indeed, will you? If I loved M. de la Marche, if I made a great sacrifice in renouncing him, would you be generous enough to release me from my promise?"

I rose trembling with anger and bathed in a cold perspiration.

"You love him!" I cried; "confess that you love him."

"And if I did," said she, putting the note in her pocket, "where would be the crime?"

"The crime would be in having lied up to this time, in saying that you did not love him."

"'Up to this time' includes a great deal! We have had no conversation on that point since last

year. At that time possibly I did not love Adhemar very much—possibly now I love him better than you. If I were to compare your conduct today with his, I should see on the one side a man without pride or delicacy, who takes advantage of a promise which my heart has perhaps not ratified; on the other an estimable friend, whose devotion braves all prejudice, and who, believing me sullied, does not insist on covering the blot with his protection."

"What! that wretch thinks I have insulted you, and he does not challenge me?"

"He does not think so, Bernard. He knows you helped me to escape from Roche-Mauprat, but he thinks it was too late."

"And he wishes to marry you, Edmee? Either he is a very noble man or he is more deeply in debt than I think him!"

"Be silent!" said Edmee angrily; "that odious explanation of such generous conduct emanates from a perverse spirit. Be silent, if you do not wish me to despise you!"

"Say that you hate me, Edmee—say it without fear, for I know it!"

"Without fear! You must know that I do not pay you the honor to fear you; now answer me: without knowing what I intend to do, do you comprehend that you should free me and renounce your barbarous claim?"

"I comprehend nothing but that I love you madly, and that I will tear out the heart of him who dares to dispute my right to you. If I do not succeed in forcing your love, I will not permit you to belong to another while I live. They shall step over my dead body to place the wedding-ring on your finger; again, I will disgrace you with my dying breath, by proclaiming that you have been mine, and thus will I mar the joy of him who would triumph over me, and if in dying I could stab you I would do so, that in the grave at least you might be my wife. That is what I shall do, Edmee; and dupe me as you will, your intrigues will have but one termination, for I have sworn it by the name of Mauprat."

"Of Mauprat the cut-throat!" she replied with cold irony, as she turned to leave the room. I was about to grasp her arm, when the priest entered. Edmee pressed his hand and retired to her room without addressing another word to me. The good man perceiving my agitation, questioned me as to its cause. But he had never succeeded in drawing from me a word on the subject of my love for Edmee, for I had never pardoned the ill-turn he had served me. I therefore evaded his questions and left him, to throw myself upon my bed and burst into sobs, those pitiless conquerors of my pride and anger.

XIV

The next day my despair increased. Edmee was like an icicle. M. de la Marche did not put in an appearance. I could not, however, get a moment alone with Edmee; in the evening I sought M. de la Marche. I did not know what I wished to say to him. I was in a state of exasperation which impelled me to act aimlessly without any set plans. I learned that he had left Paris. I returned home. I found my uncle gloomy. He frowned on seeing me, and after exchanging several trifling remarks with me, he left me to the priest, who tried to make me talk and who succeeded no better than he had the preceding day. For several days I sought an opportunity of conversing with Edmee; she avoided such a meeting. Preparations were being made to leave for Sainte-Severe; she seemed neither sad nor joyful. Finally I resolved to slip a few lines between the pages of her book, asking for an interview. In the course of five minutes I received the following reply:

"An interview would lead to no results; you would persist in your indelicacy and I in my loyalty. I

have sworn to be yours before all others; as an honorable woman, I shall not attempt to free myself from my promise—I will not marry any other. If you continue, however, to be unworthy of my esteem, I will not marry you. My father is nearing his end; a convent shall be my refuge when the only bond which attaches me to the world is snapped asunder."

I paced the floor all night in agitation; I did not try to sleep. At daybreak I was at La Fayette's; he procured for me the necessary papers for leaving France; he told me to await him in Spain, whence he would embark for the United States. I returned home to gather together the effects and money required for a very modest traveler. I left a line for my uncle to the effect that he should not worry about my absence—I would explain all in a long letter shortly. I begged of him not to condemn me until then, and to believe that I should never forget his kindness. I set out before any one had arisen, for I feared that my resolution would waver at the slightest signs of friendship. I could not pass Edmee's door without pressing my lips to the lock; then burying my face in my hands, I hurried on like a madman. I scarcely halted until I reached the other side of the Pyrenees. Then I took some rest and wrote to Edmee that she was free; that I would not oppose any of her

wishes, but that I could not remain to witness my rival's triumph. I was positive that she loved him; I was determined to conquer my love. I promised more than I could adhere to, for my wounded pride gave me confidence in myself.

I also wrote to my uncle, telling him that I did not consider myself worthy of the unlimited kindness showered upon me by him, as long as I had not won my knightly spurs. I informed him of my hopes of glory and fame; and, as I knew that Edmee would read the letter, I affected to be happy and full of ardor. I do not know if my uncle knew of the true reasons for my departure, but my pride would not permit me to confess them to him. I concluded by beseeching him not to incur any expense on my account upon the gloomy tower of Roche-Mauprat, assuring him that I could never make up my mind to occupy it, and asking him to consider the fief rebought by him as his daughter's property. I only asked him to advance me my share of the income for two or three years, that I might pay the costs of my outfit. My conduct and letters proved satisfactory. Arrived on the coast of Spain, I received from my uncle a letter full of encouragement and of gentle reproach for my abrupt departure; he gave me his blessing, declared that the fief of Roche-Mauprat should never belong

to Edmee, and sent me a considerable sum of money apart from my income.

The priest too reproached yet encouraged me; it was easy to see that he preferred Edmee's peace of mind to my happiness, and that he was truly rejoiced at my absence. A note without any address was slipped as an after-thought between those two letters. I knew that it was from the only person in the world in whom I was really interested, but I had not the courage to open it. I strolled along the sands by the sea, turning that scrap of paper in my trembling hands and fearing that upon reading it I might lose the calm despair inspired by my courage. More especially did I dread her thanks and expressions of enthusiastic joy behind which lurked the love of another.

"What can she have written me?" I asked myself; "why did she write? I do not want her pity, still less her gratitude." I was tempted to cast the fatal letter into the sea. I held it toward the waves, then pressed it to my heart. At length I decided to break the seal and read these words:

"You have done well, Bernard; but I shall miss you more than I can tell you. Go, however, where honor and duty call you; my prayer will follow you. Return when your mission is accomplished; you will find me neither married nor a nun."

In that note was inclosed the cornelian ring I

had worn during my illness and which I had returned to her on leaving Paris. I had a small golden case made in which I placed the note and ring, and which I wore upon my person.

La Fayette, arrested in France by order of the government, which opposed his expedition, soon joined us, after making his escape from prison. My preparations completed, I sailed away full of sadness, ambition, and hope. I shall not give you a description of the American war, as I am dealing principally with my personal experiences, and the history of that war is familiar to all. From an inferior rank in Washington's army, gladly accepted by me when I started out, I rapidly advanced to the rank of an officer. My military education was rapid. I entered into that with all my energy. I gained the confidence of my superiors; an excellent constitution enabled me to bear the hardships of such a life. In the midst of these I had the good fortune to cultivate the friendship of a young man, sent to me by Providence, as a companion and friend. A love for natural science had induced him to join our expedition, and it was easy to see that political sympathy played only a secondary part. He had no desire for advancement, no aptitude for strategical studies. He was more interested in his researches than in the successes of war and the triumph of liberty. His portmanteau was

always filled, not with money and clothes, but with specimens of natural history. I conceived for him a stronger liking than for any young man of my age. I was delighted to find in him what I called a "brother-in-arms," and requested him to consider me as such to the exclusion of any other intimacy. He complied with a readiness which convinced me that there was a bond of sympathy between us. He tried to prove to me that I was born to be a naturalist; he reproached me for my preoccupation, and claimed that I was endowed with qualities which would some day enable me to invent an excellent system of classification. His prediction was not realized, but his encouragement awoke in me the taste for study, which prevented my mind from becoming rusty during our camp life. He was to me as a messenger from heaven; he obtained over me an ascendancy which the priest had never succeeded in obtaining. He revealed to me a great portion of the physical world, but what he taught me of the most value was to understand myself and to reflect upon my impressions. I succeeded in governing myself to a certain point, but I never altogether conquered pride nor violence; one cannot change the essence of one's being, but one can direct one's diverse faculties toward good.

Arthur's influence led me to reflect and I succeeded in divining the motives of Edmee's conduct.

I found her noble and generous, above all in those things which had wounded me the most. The holy flame of my love did not pale during the six years of my absence. Amidst all the temptations to which I was exposed, I maintained my purity. Arthur was not infallible—several times he advised me not to shun the pleasures held out to me, but when I confided to him the passion which distanced all weakness, he ceased to combat what he had until then called my "fanaticism," and I perceived that he had more respect for me.

I related to him the details of my love affair, that he might judge of my position with regard to Edmee. I opened my heart to him and told him my story. Arthur, at its conclusion, seized my hand, assured me that I was loved, and that he saw a fresh proof of affection in each act of harshness and mistrust.

"Child," he said to me, "had she not wished to marry you, do you not see that she would have had a means of freeing herself from your claims? If she did not love you, would she have taken so much trouble to raise you from your state of abjection and render you worthy of her?"

He then entered on a dissertation as to the probabilities of the future and advised me to yield to my lady-love's wishes.

"But would it not be a disgrace for a man like me to submit to the caprices of a woman?"

"No," replied Arthur, "it is no disgrace, for that woman's conduct is not dictated by caprice. Only honorable conduct can make reparation for injury, and how few men are capable of it! You conducted yourself like Albion; do not be astonished that Edmee is as Philadelphia. She will only yield to a condition of glorious peace, and she is right."

He inquired as to what communication I had had with Edmee while in America; I showed him the few short letters I had received from her. He was struck by the common-sense and loyalty pervading them. She gave me no promise, she did not even encourage me by any direct hope, but she showed a lively interest in my return, and alluded to the pleasures of a reunion when the stories of my thrilling adventures would help to while away the evenings at the castle.

Neither my cousin's, my uncle's, nor the priest's letters ever mentioned family matters.

"Explain that if you can," I said to Arthur. "There are times when I fancy that Edmee is married, and that they have agreed to keep the fact from me until my return. Is it possible that she loves me sufficiently to seclude herself from society?"

He rejected my suspicion of Edmee's marriage

as a morbid fancy; on the contrary, he looked upon Edmee's silence on the subject of her social intercourse as admirable delicacy of feeling.

"A vain person would," said he, "inform you of all the sacrifices made for you, of all the suitors rejected; but Edmee is too high-minded to enter into such frivolous details."

These conversations were as a salutary balm to my wounds.

When France openly agreed to an alliance with America, I received news from the priest which entirely reassured me on one point. He wrote me that probably I would meet in the New World an *old friend.* Count de la Marche had command of a regiment and had set out for the United States.

"Between us," added the priest, "it was highly essential for him to make a position. Though modest and intelligent, he has always had a weakness for yielding to the prejudice of birth. In the world they attribute the rupture between him and Edmee to his reverses of fortune, and they even say that he was more attached to her dowry than to her person. I cannot believe him capable of such base designs. If you meet him, Edmee desires that you show an interest in him; your cousin's conduct with regard to him has been, as it is in all else, full of dignity and gentleness."

XV

On the eve of M. de la Marche's departure, after the priest had sent away his letter, an event took place at La Varenne which caused me in America a pleasant surprise, and which moreover was connected in a remarkable manner with the most important events of my life, as you shall see later.

Although I had been wounded at Savannah, I was actively engaged in Virginia, under the orders of General Greene, in collecting the remainder of Gates' army—Gates, who was in my opinion a hero far superior to his fortunate rival, Washington. We had just received the news of the landing of M. de Ternay's squadron, and we hoped for more help than we indeed received.

I was walking in the woods with Arthur, not very far from the camp, profiting by the moment of respite to talk of other subjects than Cornwallis and Arnold's infamy. I would tell Arthur of the family at Sainte-Severe, and of many awkward scenes in my early life there, after leaving Roche-Mauprat; I too described to him my dress and the scorn and horror of Mlle. Leblanc.

I do not know how, in the midst of those amusing pictures, the solemn hidalgo, Marcasse, presented himself to my mind, but he did, and I gave a faithful sketch of that enigmatical personage. Arthur laughed heartily, and declared he would give all he had to own an "animal," as curious as the one I had described to him.

Suddenly, at a bend in the road, we found ourselves in the presence of a tall man, poorly clad, very much emaciated, with a grave and pensive air, carrying a long sword in his hand. The person so strongly resembled my sketch that Arthur, struck by the absurd likeness, burst into a roar of laughter and stepped aside to allow Marcasse's "double" to pass by. As for me, I no longer laughed. With eyes fixed and arm extended, I approached, not Marcasse's ghost, but Marcasse in the flesh. Petrified with astonishment, I retreated several paces, while my emotion, which Arthur mistook for facetiousness, served to increase his hilarity.

The rat-catcher exhibited no surprise; perhaps he thought that was the way of greeting people on the other side of the ocean. Arthur's gayety, however, became infectious when Marcasse said to me with incomparable composure:

"It is a long time, Monsieur Bernard, since I have had the honor of meeting you."

"It is indeed, my good man," said I gayly, shak-

ing my old friend's hand; "but tell me how it happens that I meet you here?"

"I will tell you, my dear general," replied Marcasse, who had apparently been dazzled by my captain's uniform. "If you will permit me to walk with you, I will tell you many things, many things!"

Upon hearing Marcasse repeat his last words in a low tone, as if echoing them, Arthur's mirth burst forth anew. Marcasse turned toward him and saluted him with imperturbable gravity. Arthur became serious at once, rose and bowed to the ground with comical dignity.

We returned to the camp together. On the way Marcasse told me, in his peculiar style, why he had decided to leave his country and friends to help the American cause with his sword. M. de la Marche left for America at the time that Marcasse was making his annual rounds. He heard, in the vicinity of the count's estates, wonderful stories of that far country, full of adventure, from which one never returned without such a quantity of gold and silver that it required ten vessels to carry it. Beneath Marcasse's calm exterior was concealed a glowing imagination, an inordinate love of the extraordinary, which was kindled by the descriptions of that Eldorado. What was, therefore, M. de la Marche's surprise when on the night of his departure Marcasse presented himself and proposed to accompany him

to America as his valet; in vain did M. de la Marche represent to him that he was too old to give up his profession, and take the chances of a new existence; Marcasse was firm in his determination. His departure was a great surprise to the inhabitants of La Varenne. Arrived in America, his master, observing his longing for liberty, offered him a sum of money and letters of recommendation that he might join the army as a volunteer. Marcasse, cognizant of the state of his master's finances, refused the money, accepted the letters, and set out. His intention was to go to Philadelphia, but by chance he heard that I was in the South, and thinking he would find in me a counselor, he had come to join me, on foot and alone, through a strange country full of perils of all kinds. His dress alone had suffered; his yellow face was unchanged. The only strange thing about him was that from time to time he looked behind him, as if to call some one—then he smiled and sighed at the same time. I could not resist asking him the cause of his uneasiness.

"Alas!" said he, "habit cannot be overcome! A good dog! Poor dog!"

"Blaireau is dead," said I, "and you cannot become accustomed to the thought?"

"Dead!" cried he; "no, thank God. Friend Patience—good friend! Blaireau happy—not sad, like his master—his master alone!"

"If Blaireau is with Patience," said Arthur, "he is happy indeed. Patience will cherish him for love of you, and certainly you will see your kind friend and faithful dog again!"

Marcasse raised his eyes to the person who seemed so familiar with his life, but feeling sure that he had never seen him, he did as was his custom when nonplussed—he saluted him respectfully.

On my recommendation Marcasse was enrolled, and soon after he became a sergeant. This worthy man went through the campaign with me, and when in 1793 I passed beneath my country's flag and rejoined the army of Rochambeau, he followed me, willing to share my lot to the end.

At first he afforded us a source of amusement, but soon, by his brave conduct and intrepidity, he won the esteem of all, and I had cause to be proud of my protege.

When, however, I talked to him of my cousin, he gave me little satisfaction; though he told me that there was no question of her marriage with any one. I fancied he was uneasy at being interrogated as if he had a secret to guard. Honor forbade me telling him of my hopes. When near Arthur I interpreted Edmee's letters favorably; when separated from him my fears were aroused, and my sojourn in America weighed heavier and heavier upon me. My separation from Arthur took place when I left

the American army to enter the service of the French general.

I hailed peace which proclaimed the independence of the United States with delight, and set sail with my brave Marcasse, divided between feelings of sadness at leaving my old friend and feelings of joy at again meeting my only love.

XVI

We left Brest without sending a letter ahead of us. When we reached La Varenne we descended from the post-chaise and walked through the woods. As I beheld the venerable trees in the park my heart pulsated so violently that I was forced to halt.

"Well!" said Marcasse, turning toward me with an air almost severe, as if to reproach me for my weakness. But a moment later I saw his face twitch with emotion. He started, on hearing a plaintive bark, on recognizing Blaireau; the faithful animal had scented his master from afar and had run to lay himself at his feet. After having been caressed, he started with the rapidity of lightning toward Patience's cottage.

"Yes, go and warn him, good dog," cried Marcasse. He turned his head, and I saw two large tears rolling down the cheeks of the impassive hidalgo.

We quickened our steps. Patience's little cottage had undergone many improvements; the changes were so marked that I fancied we should not find Patience there. But Marcasse felt no

fear; Blaireau had told him that the philosopher was alive. I followed him in silence down the walk, which seemed interminable, saying to myself, "Edmee is perhaps there!" She was not, however, for I heard the recluse's voice saying: "Down, Blaireau! are you mad? that is what one gets for spoiling folks!"

"Blaireau is not mad," said I, entering; "have you become deaf to the approach of a friend, Master Patience?"

Patience approached me with his usual cordiality. I embraced him; he was surprised and pleased at my joy, and was examining me from head to foot when Marcasse appeared on the threshold.

"Now I can die; my eyes have rested upon him whom I awaited."

The hidalgo made no reply, but seated himself on a chair, turned pale, and closed his eyes; he was faint. Patience poured him out some wine, and after swallowing a few drops, Marcasse revived; he excused his evident weakness by attributing it to the heat and fatigue; he would not own its real cause. When he was restored, Patience said to me:

"Ah, my officer, I see you do not care to stop here long. Let us proceed then to the place you are eager to reach; they will be surprised and glad to see you."

As we crossed the park, Patience explained to us the change in his habitation and his life.

"As for myself, you see that I am not changed," he said. "The same man, the same habits! And though I offered you wine just now, I have not ceased drinking water. However, I have money, and lands, and workmen. It is all in spite of myself, as you will see. About three years ago Mlle. Edmee spoke to me of the trouble she had in bestowing her charity upon those most deserving of it. The priest was as unskillful as she; she therefore dispensed much money and did little good. I told her that money was not necessary to happiness; that what rendered people unhappy was not the impossibility of dressing as well as others, of going to the tavern on Sunday, of being able to say, 'My home, my cow, my granaries,' but rather weakness of body, inclemency of weather, hunger and thirst. Most people are not philosophers like me; they are vain—they use the little they earn, they can deprive themselves of no pleasure; in short, they do not know how to control money, they take no thought of the morrow, they do not pay their debts with the money given them, but pay a high rate of interest and buy with your money something that will astonish and render their neighbors jealous. Their children have the same passions and vanities as they. It is necessary that persons like you,

who do so much charity, must bestow it without consulting the wishes of him who asks it after having found out his veritable needs. But Edmee's objection to this was that she could not give up her entire time, for her father was feeble and could not spare her. To help her out of her difficulty, I promised to assist her, though it cost me many pangs to mingle with the people whom I had avoided so studiously and who looked upon me with mistrust, but knowing of Edmee's friendship for me they would not openly repulse me, and we found out what we desired to know. Thus was I dragged into the work, and now it is I who direct all the work and transact the business. I no longer walk abroad at night and sleep in the day-time. I am now 'Monsieur Patience,' and not the sorcerer of Gazean Tower. These honors have not turned my head, and I assure you that when I have done what I can, I shall leave the cares of grandeur and return to the life of a philosopher, perhaps, to Gazean Tower—who knows!"

We had in the meantime reached our destination. I hesitated to cross the threshold at first; when I did enter, I met Saint-Jean, who, not recognizing me, uttered an exclamation and barred the way, that I might not enter unannounced. I pushed him out of my way and reached the drawing-room door; but as I was about to push it noisily open,

I paused and entered so softly that Edmee, who was embroidering, thought it was the respectful Saint-Jean.

My uncle was asleep. I remained several moments looking at my cousin as she bent over her work, pale, sad, but composed, the personification of filial duty; then I came forward and threw myself at her feet in silence. She uttered no cry, but she encircled my neck with her arms and pressed my head upon her bosom. In that mute joy I recognized my sister. The knight started out of his sleep, his eyes staring, his elbows upon his knees, his body bent forward, saying:

"Well, who is that?"

He could not see my face hidden upon Edmee's bosom; she turned me toward him, and he clasped me tenderly in his weak arms. You can imagine the questions I was overwhelmed with and the attention showered upon me. Edmee was quite maternal in her fondness, and during that entire day, while near her, I had no other thoughts than those I should have had had I been her son. But I will spare you more of those domestic scenes which my memory involuntarily recalls with so much pleasure.

XVII

A great change had taken place in me in the course of six years. Edmee seemed satisfied with the progress of my intellect and reason.

"I am not astonished at it," she said to me; "your letters forewarned me."

My uncle was no longer strong enough to enter into stormy debates. He did not conceal from me the fact that his greatest wish was to see me Edmee's husband before he died, and when I replied that it was the only desire, the only ambition of my life, he said:

"I know it, I know it! All depends upon her, and I do not think that she has any longer cause for hesitation; I do not see what she could find to bring forward now."

This speech implied a doubt which I could not clear up and which rendered me very uneasy. Edmee's sensitive pride inspired me with fear; her ineffable kindness impressed me with such respect that I did not dare to inquire of her as to my fate. I conducted myself as if I had no other hope than that of being always her brother and friend.

At first I refused to take possession of Roche-Mauprat.

"It is absolutely necessary," said my uncle, "that you should see the changes I have made in your estate. You must acquaint yourself with your business and show an interest in the work of your peasants. I am too old now to superintend matters; for two years I have been confined to my room. Edmee is very practical, but she is afraid to venture into that place; it is a childish fancy!"

"I know I should be more courageous," said I, "but what you prescribe is the hardest thing in the world. I have not set foot in that miserable place since I helped Edmee to escape; it seems to me as if you were taking me from heaven to place me in hell."

The knight shrugged his shoulders; the priest begged me to satisfy him. I yielded, and resolved to conquer myself; I took leave of Edmee for two days. The priest offered to accompany me, but I did not wish to take him from Edmee's side, for her life was very sad, a prisoner as she was in her father's sick-room.

Edmee's obstinate refusals and M. de la Marche's departure had caused much surprise and given rise to many surmises. It was rumored that Edmee had passed a night at Roche-Mauprat. Marked by that stigma she was not sought after by anybody.

My absence had only served to confirm those suspicions. I had saved her from death, they said, but not from shame, and could not make her my wife; I was in love with her, and fled from her in order to resist the temptation of marrying her. It all seemed so plausible that it was difficult to convince the public to the contrary. That was the cause of Edmee's isolation.

I took with me only my faithful sergeant, Marcasse. We arrived at Roche-Mauprat on an autumn day. My companion and I passed through the woods and heather in silence; we took a roundabout way in order to avoid the Gazean Tower, which I did not feel strong enough to see. I was received coldly by the peasants of Berry. I was installed in one of the buildings that had been left standing after the siege; it was a specimen of the massive architecture of the tenth century; the door was smaller than the windows, and the windows gave so little light that we had to use torches even when the sun was bright without. The building had been restored to serve as a temporary lodging for the new lord or his assistants. My uncle Hubert had often stopped there to watch my interests when he was in health, and I was shown to the room he had occupied, and which was henceforth called "the master's room."

All the old furniture had been brought thither.

All had been so changed that I recognized nothing, and could not tell in which of the buildings I was.

The servant lighted a fire, while I sank into a chair, and burying my face in my hands, fell into a gloomy reverie. Marcasse had remained in the stable to care for our horses. Blaireau had followed me and was stretched in front of the fireplace, looking at me from time to time with a discontented air, as if to ask the cause of such a wretched lodging and such a poor fire. The fire-light illumined the room, giving it a doubtful and bizarre appearance. Blaireau arose, turned his back to the fire and seated himself between my legs, as if awaiting something strange and unforeseen. I then discovered that that room was my grandfather Tristan's bed-chamber, occupied after his death by his eldest son, the detestable Jean, my most cruel oppressor. I was seized with a feeling of terror—the chair in which I sat was the one in which Jean had planned his roguish tricks. At that moment I saw passing before my eyes the specters of all the Mauprats with their blood-stained hands and bleared eyes. I arose and was about to fly, when I saw a face, so distinct, so familiar, that I fell back in my chair bathed in a cold perspiration. Jean Mauprat was standing by the bed, between the hangings. He looked the same as ever, only that he was thinner, paler, and more hideous;

his head was shaved and his form was wrapped in a dark shroud. He cast upon me a fiendish glance; a hateful and scornful smile hovered about his thin lips. He stood there motionless, his sparkling eyes fixed upon me, as if he were about to speak. I was paralyzed with fear. Blaireau rushed upon him as I fainted.

When I revived Marcasse was by my side. I had difficulty in collecting my thoughts. As soon as I could stand up, I seized Marcasse and hastily drew him out of the horrible room. I only breathed freely when we reached the court-yard. I did not then hesitate to attribute what had taken place to a fancy of my brain. I had proved my courage in battle, and I did not blush to avow the truth to my sergeant. I answered his questions frankly, and described to him my vision in so decided a manner that he was impressed by it himself, and repeated several times thoughtfully:

"Singular! singular! astonishing!"

I struggled for several days to overcome the repugnance I felt at returning to Roche-Mauprat, and would have left the place had I not feared to offend my uncle.

"Tell me," said Marcasse, "did you notice Blaireau—what did Blaireau do?"

"I thought Blaireau rushed upon the phantom just as it disappeared—but I dreamed that like the rest."

"Hum!" said the sergeant; "when I entered Blaireau was all excitement; he went from you to me, whined, and scratched the wall. Singular! Astonishing, Captain, astonishing!"

After several moments of reflection, he cried, shaking his head:

"No ghosts, no ghosts! Why dead, Jean? Not dead! Two more Mauprats—who knows? No ghosts! My master mad? No! Ill? No!"

After that soliloquy the sergeant took a light, drew his sword, whistled to Blaireau, and bidding me remain below, he proceeded on his way to the chamber. Much as I disliked the idea of returning to it, I did not hesitate to follow Marcasse in spite of his advice, and our first care was to examine the bed; but while we were talking in the court the servant had put on clean sheets and smoothed the coverlet.

"Who has slept there?" asked Marcasse.

"No one but M. de Mauprat or M. Aubert."

"But to-day or yesterday, for example?" persisted Marcasse.

"No one, sir; for it is two years since M. de Mauprat was here, and of late M. Aubert has breakfasted here and returned at night."

"But the bed had been slept in," said Marcasse, staring fixedly at her.

"It may be," she replied, "that it was rumpled;

I do not know how it was left the last time. I did not notice it much on changing the bed-clothes; all that I know is that M. Bernard's cloak lay upon it."

"My cloak!" I exclaimed; "it is in the stable."

"And mine too," said Marcasse; "I rolled them up and put them on the oat-bin."

"You have two then," insisted the servant, "for I took one from the bed—a black cloak, not a new one either."

"Mine is lined with red and bordered with gold lace; Marcasse's is gray."

"What did you do with it?" asked the serjeant.

"My faith, sir, I put it on the easy-chair," replied the woman; "you must have taken it away when I went in search of a candle. I do not see it anywhere."

We searched the entire room, but could not find it. When we were assured that the servants had not lodged nor seen any one, we told them that Marcasse had carelessly rolled the cloak up with the others, and we locked ourselves in the room to explore at our ease—for it was evident that I had not seen a specter, but Jean Mauprat himself, or a man who resembled him and whom I had taken for him. Marcasse set Blaireau upon the trail. The dog having smelt everywhere, persisted in scratching the wall on the side upon which I had

seen the apparition. Marcasse examined the walls and the wood-work; in vain did he sound the panels. At length he turned to me and said:

"We are foolish; were we to search until doomsday we could not find a spring if there were none."

"Why," I asked, "for the simple reason that your dog scratches the wall, do you persist in believing that Jean Mauprat, or the man who looks like him, did not enter and leave by the door?"

"Granted that he entered that way," said Marcasse; "but when the servant came down-stairs I was on the staircase brushing my shoes—when I heard a fall up here I rushed up and found you stretched upon the floor—no one within nor without."

"In that case I must have dreamed of my uncle, and the servant of my cloak, for surely there is no secret door; and if there were one, and all the Mauprats living and dead had the key of it, what would it concern us? Are we detectives to spy upon those wretches? If we should find them concealed anywhere, would we not aid them to fly, rather than deliver them up to justice? We have our arms; we do not fear that they will assassinate us to-night. So let us eat the omelet which these good people have prepared for us, for if we continue to knock on the walls they will think us crazy."

Marcasse insisted upon remaining in the haunted

room with me, giving as his excuse that I might be taken ill again.

After supper, the wine having loosened my tongue I told him of my hopes and fears. We fell asleep as we talked, Blaireau at his master's feet, the sword beside the hidalgo, the light between us, my pistols at my elbow, my hunting-knife under my pillow, and the bolts drawn. Nothing disturbed our rest; when we awoke, I asked:

"Did you see or hear anything in the night?"

"Nothing at all," he replied; "but just the same, Blaireau did not sleep well and nothing has been explained."

"I shall not trouble about it, certainly," replied I.

"Wrong! you are wrong!"

"That may be; but I do not like this room, and the sooner I get out of it the better."

"Very well, I will go with you; but I shall return. I shall not let the matter rest. I know what Jean Mauprat is capable of, and *you do not*."

"I do not wish to know; and if there is any danger here to me or mine, I do not want you to return."

Marcasse shook his head, but did not make any reply. Before leaving we made another circuit of the estate. Marcasse was struck by an occurrence to which I attached no importance. The steward wanted to present me to his wife, but she ran into

the hemp-field. I laid her timidity to the bashfulness of youth.

"My faith, nice youth!" said Marcasse; "she is as *young* as I am, and that is past fifty! There is something at the bottom of that, I tell you."

"What can it be?"

"Hem!—she was very friendly with Jean Mauprat in his time! Ah, believe me, I know many things!"

"You can tell me them when we come here again, which will not be very soon. To oblige me, Marcasse, do not mention to any one what has taken place here. Every one has not the same esteem for your captain as you have."

"He must be a fool who does not esteem my captain; but if you command me, I will be silent."

He kept his word.

For naught in the world would I have troubled Edmee with that story.

I could not, however, restrain Marcasse from putting his plans into execution. The following morning he disappeared, and I learned from Patience that he had returned to Roche-Mauprat under the pretext of having forgotten something.

XVIII

While Marcasse was absent I spent alternate days of delight and anguish by Edmee's side. Her conduct kept me in constant doubt. One day the knight had a long conference with her when I was out for a walk; I entered just as their conversation was the most animated; when I appeared my uncle said to me:

"Approach! tell Edmee that you love her, that you will make her happy, that you have corrected your faults. Come to some agreement, for this must be settled. Our position relative to the world is insupportable, and I do not wish to descend to my grave without seeing my daughter's honor vindicated, and without knowing that she will not foolishly enter a convent instead of occupying the position which is hers and which I have worked all my life to assure. Come, Bernard, to her feet! Persuade her, or I shall believe that you do not love her and do not sincerely desire to marry her!"

"I? Great heavens!" I cried; "when I have had no other thought for seven years—when my heart has known no other wish!"

I poured forth a flood of passionate words. Edmee listened to them in silence without withdrawing her hands, which I covered with kisses. But her face was grave and her voice trembled as she said, after some reflection:

"My father should not doubt my word. I have promised to marry Bernard; I have promised Bernard and my father; I shall surely marry him." Then she added, after another pause, in a tone of more severity: "But if my father is about to die, what power could force me to don my wedding-gown on the eve of his death? If, on the contrary, he is as I think, still strong, why does he so urgently press me to shorten the time I have asked him to grant me? should not such a step be well weighed—that is, all its risks and advantages?"

"Great Lord! you have thought it over for seven years," said the knight. "If you wish to marry Bernard, marry him; if not, say so—that some one else may sue for you "

"Father," replied Edmee, coldly, "I will marry none but him."

"'But him' is all very well; but perhaps that means you will not marry him!"

"I will, father," replied Edmee; "I only asked several months more of freedom; but since you are dissatisfied, I am ready to obey your orders."

"That is a fine way to consent, and very pleasant

for your cousin. My faith, Bernard, I am an old man, but I tell you I have never been able to understand women, and probably I shall die without doing so."

"Uncle," said I, "I understand my cousin's reluctance with regard to me; I have merited it. I have, it is true, done all in my power to make amends for my errors, but can she so easily forget a past in which she has suffered so much? If she cannot forgive me I will, renouncing all hope in this world, go far away from her and you, to punish myself by a chastisement worse than death."

"There, all is at an end!" cried my uncle; "is that what you want, my girl?"

I took several steps toward the door. I was agonized. Edmee ran to me, seized my arm, and leading me to her father, she said:

"Your words are cruel and ungrateful! Do you wish to return my motherly interest in you by leaving me?"

"No, Edmee; I feel that you have done for me more than I deserve. Do not let us speak of this any more. Give me your love; I hope to prove myself worthy of it in the future!"

"Embrace each other," said the knight. "Bernard, no matter what Edmee's caprices, never desert her if you wish to receive your adopted father's blessing. If you cannot become her husband, be

to her always a brother. Remember, my boy, that she will soon be alone on earth, and that I should die in despair, did I not know that she would have a protector here; remember that on your account, owing to her vow made to you, she has been calumniated."

The knight burst into tears.

"Enough, enough!" I cried, falling at his feet. "I feel that Edmee must not marry me; it would be to acknowledge the injury I have drawn upon her. I will remain here. I will never see her if she demand that of me, but I will sleep beside her door like a faithful dog, and I will tear into pieces any one who would dare to present himself to her except upon his knees; and if some day a man, more honorable than I am, gains her affection, I will be her friend, her brother, and when I have seen them happy together, I will die far from them, in peace."

Sobs choked my utterance; my uncle pressed his daughter and me to his breast, and we mingled our tears, swearing that we would not be separated during his life-time nor after his death.

"Do not give up hope of winning her," the knight whispered to me several moments later; "she has strange fancies, but nothing will ever convince me that she does not love you."

A few days after this I was walking in the park with the priest.

"I must tell you," said he, "of an adventure which befell me yesterday and which is quite romantic. I had been roaming in the woods at Briantes and descended to the spring at Fougeres. My head was bent and I was walking on the wet pebbles, guided by the sound of the trickling of the clear stream from the heart of the rock. I was about to seat myself on the stone which forms a natural seat beside it, when I saw that the place was already occupied by a monk whose hood partly concealed his pale and withered face. He seemed startled on seeing me. I reassured him as well as I could by telling him that it was not my intention to disturb him, but only to obtain a drink of water.

"Struck by the monk's humble manner, his melancholy air, his dreamy attitude in that poetical spot on which I had often pictured the meeting between the Samaritan and the Savior, I took quite an interest in talking with him, and learned that he was a Trappist (a religious order of monks receiving its name from La Trappe, in Normandy, where they occupy an abbey), and that he was making a pilgrimage in order to do penance.

" 'Do nota sk me my name nor my country,' said he. 'I belong to an illustrious family which would blush to think of my existence; moreover, on entering our order we abjure all pride in the past—we die in the world in order to be born again in Jesus

Christ. But you may be sure that you see in me one of the most striking examples of the miracles of mercy, and if I could tell you the story of my religious life, you would surely be touched by it.'

"You know," continued the priest, "that I do not like monks, that I mistrust their humility, that I have a horror of their idleness; but this one spoke in such a sorrowful and touching strain, he seemed so impressed with his duties, so full of repentance, that he won my heart. We spent two hours together. In vain did I try to induce him to come to the castle; he had engaged lodging for the night. He said he had a traveling companion whom he could not leave.

" 'But since you are so kind,' said he, 'I shall be happy to meet you here to-morrow at sunset; perhaps I may make so bold as to ask a favor of you; you can be useful to me in an important matter I have on hand in this part of the country. I can tell you no more at present.'

"I assured him that he might count upon me, that I would willingly oblige a man like him."

"So you are awaiting with impatience the hour of meeting?" said I to the priest.

"Undoubtedly," he replied; "my new acquaintance has so much attraction for me that if I did not fear to abuse the confidence imposed in me, I would take Edmee to the spring."

"I think," I made answer, "that Edmee can employ her time to better advantage than by listening to your monk's stories—probably he is a humbug, like so many others to whom you have shown kindness."

The priest smiled, and we strolled along to Patience's cottage. The hour arrived for the priest to keep his appointment; as we neared the place of meeting he seemed somewhat uncertain, and I commenced to make sport of him with the privilege of friendship.

"Come," said he, "you shall see and study him for several moments; but you must retire until I have listened to his confidences."

As we approached I saw the monk through the interlacing branches of an enormous ash which shaded the spring; from that point we could examine him at our ease. Scarcely had I seen him than I laughed bitterly, grasped the priest's arm, and said to him in agitation: "My dear sir, have you ever seen my uncle Jean Mauprat's face?"

"Never to my knowledge," replied he; "but what do you mean?"

"I mean to tell you, my friend, that your venerable and pious monk is no other than Jean de Mauprat, the cut-throat."

"You are mad," he cried; "Jean Mauprat has been dead a long time."

"Jean Mauprat is not dead, nor Antoine Mauprat either perhaps, and I am less surprised than you for I have already met one of those two ghosts. That he has become a monk and repents of his sins is barely possible; but that he has disguised himself in order to carry out some evil design is not at all improbable, and I beg of you to be upon your guard."

The priest was so much startled that he did not wish to keep his appointment. Knowing the priest's weakness, I crept into the brush-wood in order to see and hear what was going on. But matters did not take the turn I thought they would. The monk divulged his name to the priest. He confessed that, being penitent and not being able to atone sufficiently for his misdeeds, he was about to give himself up into the hands of the law in order to expiate publicly his crimes. The man, endowed with superior faculties, had acquired in the cloister a mystic eloquence. The priest tried to combat a resolution which seemed to him absurd. But he replied that, having committed crimes of pagan barbarity, he could only redeem his soul at the cost of a public penitence worthy of the early Christians.

"Since you persist in that determination," said the priest to him, "will you at least tell me in what you thought I could aid you?"

"I cannot do that," replied the monk, "without

the authority of a man who will soon be the last of the Mauprats. I must speak with Bernard Mauprat—I will not say my nephew, for were he to hear me he would blush for the relationship. I heard of his return from America, and that news decided me to undertake this journey."

"May I ask what you have in common to-day with that young man? Are you not afraid that, embittered by the ill-treatment received by him at Roche-Mauprat, he will refuse to see you?"

"I am certain he will refuse; but I hope that you will induce him to grant me that interview, for you are kind and generous, sir. You have promised to oblige me; moreover, you are his friend, and you will make him understand that it concerns his interest and the honor of his name."

"How is that? Undoubtedly he will be adverse to your appearing before a public tribunal; he will surely demand of you to renounce that expiation; how could you hope that he would consent?"

"I hope it because God is great and good, because he will soften the heart of him who listens to the outpourings of a truly repentant soul. Moreover, it is necessary that I die at peace with those I have offended. I must fall at Bernard Mauprat's feet that he may forgive my sins. My tears will move him, or if he scorn those, I shall at least have done my duty."

Seeing that he talked with the certainty of being overheard by me. I was disgusted; I saw through his hypocrisy.

When the priest joined me, we decided not to tell the knight and Edmee of the adventure, lest they might be rendered uneasy by it.

XIX

After having maturely reflected upon the monk's probable intentions, I determined to accord him the asked-for interview. He could not injure me by his acts, and I would do what I could to prevent my uncle from being annoyed by his intrigues.

Therefore, the following day after vespers I entered the village and rang the bell at the Carmelite monastery, the retreat chosen by the Trappist. I was greeted by the prior, who was a prisoner in his chair, chained there by gout. That man offered a strange contrast to the venerable knight, who, though pale and suffering, was noble and patriarchal in his melancholy. The prior was short, fat, and very petulant. The upper part of his body was free; he turned his head quickly from side to side; he gesticulated wildly when he issued orders. He received me with exaggerated politeness and said:

"I know, my dear child, the object which brings you; you have come to pay your respects to your relative, the Trappist, whom God sent to us to serve as an example to the world and to show forth a miracle of grace."

"Sir," I replied, "I am not a good enough Christian to appreciate the miracle of which you speak. I am here because M. Jean de Mauprat desires to inform me of matters which concern me and to which I am ready to listen—if you will permit me to see him."

"I did not wish him to see you before I did, young man; I have a boon to ask of you in the name of charity, of the blood that flows in your veins. You are a man of the world, I know. You have much to complain of against him who once was Jean de Mauprat, but who to-day is the humble brother, Jean-Nepomucene; if you feel no pity for him, considerations of public decency and of family pride should make you join me in trying to turn him from his pious resolutions, and you will, I do not doubt."

"Perhaps, sir," said I coldly; "but may I ask you to what motives our family owes the interest you seem to take in its affairs?"

"To the spirit of charity which animates all the servants of Christ," replied the prior with well-simulated dignity.

In the course of conversation I gathered this much: My uncle Jean reclaimed from me his portion of the fief of Roche-Mauprat, and the prior was commissioned to tell me that I must choose between disbursing a considerable sum or a suit which

he proposed to commence, the exposure of which would not fail to shorten the knight's days and bring upon me personal embarrassment. All this was insinuated under the pretense of the most christian-like solicitude for me and fervent admiration for the Trappist's zeal.

I saw clearly that Jean Mauprat did not ask of me the means of subsistence, but that I would have to beg him to accept a portion of my fortune to prevent him from dragging my name, and perhaps myself, into the criminal courts.

"So you, sir, are going to try to change that resolution. I admire your zeal and I thank you, but I do not think that so many negotiations are necessary. M. Jean de Mauprat reclaims his portion of the inheritance; nothing is more just. You know, however, that I only owe the enjoyment of my fortune to my uncle Hubert de Mauprat's kindness; that he has paid all the family debts, which were enormous; that I can give away nothing without his permission; that I am only the trustee of a fortune which I have not as yet accepted."

"Ah," he said, "very well. It seems that I was mistaken, and that one must apply to M. Hubert de Mauprat. I shall do so, for I do not doubt that he will be pleased to prevent a scandal in his family."

"I understand, sir," I replied, "that you mean that

for a threat. I will answer you in the same tone. If M. Jean de Mauprat persecutes my uncle and cousin, he will have to deal with me. If he is without resources, and requires aid, I will give him from my own income the means of living humbly according to his vows; but if ambition actuates him to intimidate my uncle by menace, I will defend him at the peril of my honor and life."

"You must know, my dear sir, that I do not approve of your relative's plan, and would do anything in the world to hinder him. Believe me, I desire peace. I am a good man."

"Yes, a very good man," I replied ironically. "If true religion urges brother Jean the Trappist to a public reparation, it will be easy to make him understand that he must not do it, for he would drag others into the abyss with him; but if, as I suppose, M. Jean de Mauprat has not the least desire to surrender into the hand of the law, his threats do not frighten me, and I will prevent them from intimidating any one else."

"Is that all I can tell him?"

"That is all, though I am surprised that after expressing such an earnest desire to see me, he should not appear when I arrive."

"Sir," said the prior with absurd dignity, "my duty is to see that peace reigns in this holy place.

I oppose all interviews that can lead to violent scenes."

With many thanks for his kindness in acting as a medium, I bowed low and withdrew.

XX

I related to the priest, who awaited me at Patience's cottage, the details of that conference, and he was of my opinion, that the prior, far from seeking to turn the Trappist from his ostensible designs was doing all in his power to egg him on to obtain large sums of money from me; to place in the hands of a monkish Mauprat the fruits of the labors and savings of a secular Mauprat.

"But they will be revenged upon you, I fear; do not shrug your shoulders; one should always fear a coward, for he will strike from behind when one expects a blow from the front."

Devising plans for the prevention of a meeting between the supposed monk and the knight, we reached the castle.

I was possessed with a sense of uneasiness upon entering that silent abode. As I crossed the billiard-room I thought I saw a dark shadow pass the window and vanish in the twilight. I hastily pushed open the drawing-room door and halted there; all was silent. I was about to retire and seek Edmee in her father's room, when I thought

I saw something white move near the chimney where the knight always sat.

"Edmee, are you here?" I cried. No one replied. The cold perspiration started upon my brow and my limbs trembled. Ashamed of such weakness, I rushed toward the fire-place, anxiously calling Edmee's name.

"Is it you, Bernard?" I heard at length in tremulous tones. I clasped her in my arms; she was kneeling beside her father's chair, pressing her lips to his cold hands.

"Great God!" I exclaimed, distinguishing the knight's livid face in the dim light; "is our father dead?"

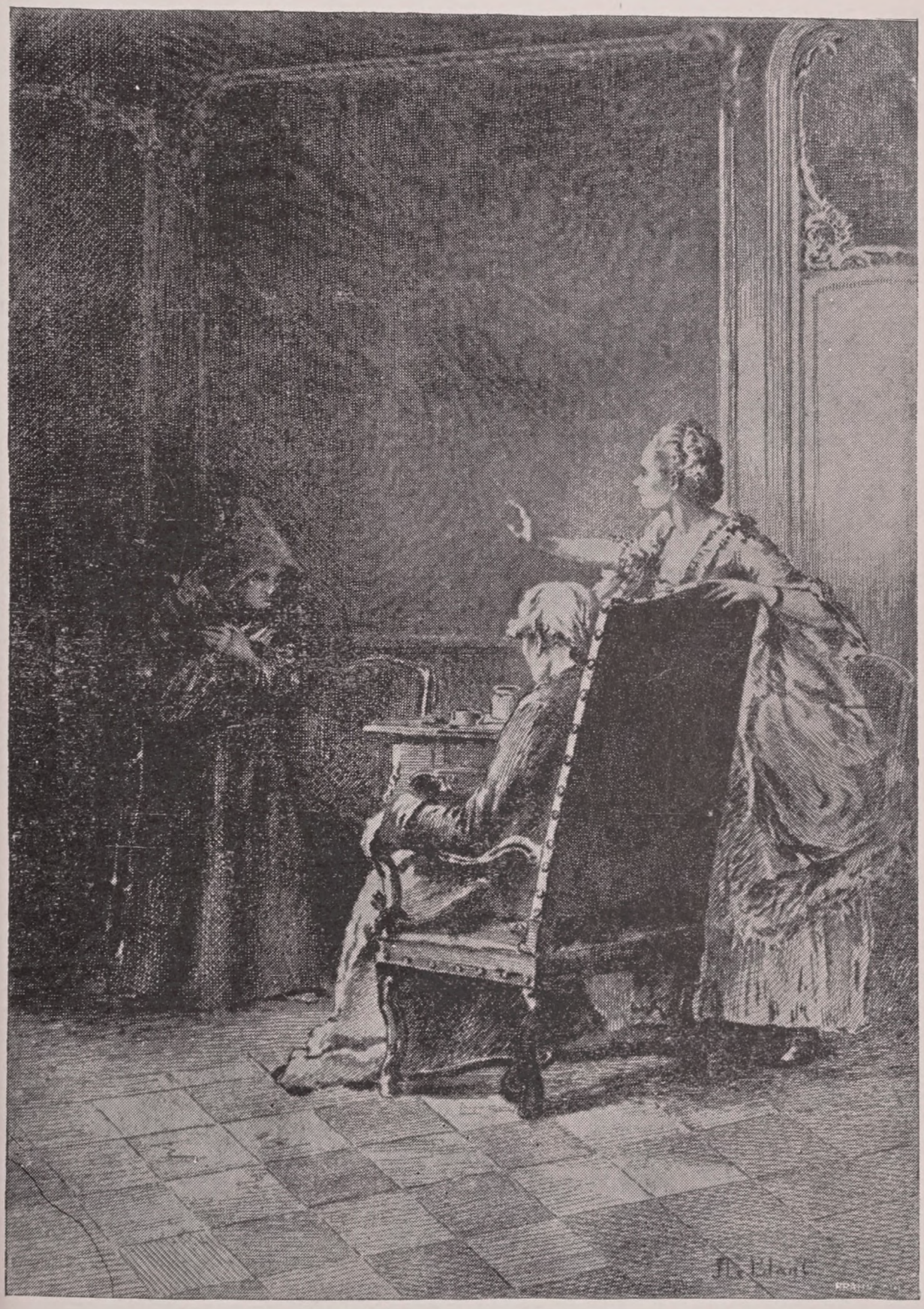
"It may be," said she in a whisper; "perhaps, please God, he has only fainted. Light, for heaven's sake; ring the bell! He has only been in this condition an instant."

I rang at once; the priest joined us and we succeeded in reviving my uncle. But when he opened his eyes his mind seemed struggling with the impressions of a painful dream.

"Is that terrible phantom gone?" he cried several times. "Here, Saint-Jean, my pistols! Throw that fellow out of the window!"

"What has happened?" I asked Edmee; "who has been here during my absence?"

"Were I to tell you," replied Edmee; "you would



scarcely believe it; you would accuse my father and me of being fanciful. I will tell you soon though; now let us attend to my father."

By tender words and caresses she calmed the old man; we then bore him to his room. When he was gone, Edmee proceeded to tell the priest and me her adventure.

She said that about fifteen minutes before our return a mendicant friar had entered the room in which she sat at her needle-work by her father's side. Not at all surprised by that common occurrence, she arose to take her purse from the mantelpiece, addressing kind and sympathetic words to the monk; but just as she turned to hand him her alms, the knight started from his sleep, and cried, as he examined the man with an air at once incensed and terrified:

"Sir, what are you doing here in this garb?"

Edmee then looked at the monk's face and recognized—"Whom?—you would never guess!" said she—"that horrible Jean Mauprat! I saw him but one hour, yet I have never forgotten that repulsive face. I could not restrain an exclamation of terror.

"'Do not be frightened,' said he, with a grin; 'I do not come as an enemy, but as a supplicant.'

"He fell upon his knees near my father, and in a

mournful voice began to repeat a formula of confession, asking pardon for his offenses.

" 'This miserable man is mad,' cried my father, pulling the bell-cord. No one answered his summons, and we were forced to listen to the strange discourse. He had come, before yielding in expiation of his crimes to the secular sword, to ask my father's forgiveness and blessing.

"As he talked he neared my father upon his knees. I was inspired with a feeling of disgust, and commanded him imperiously to rise. He turned toward me, and though he tried to hide it, I noticed a sparkle of anger in his eyes.

"My father attempted to rise, but fell back in his chair exhausted; steps were heard in the billiard-room, and the monk passed through the open window with the rapidity of lightning."

"The abominable coward did not lose much time, you see!" I exclaimed to the priest; "he has succeeded in his plan of intimidating my uncle and his daughter; but he has not reckoned upon me; if he ever dares to come here again—"

"Be silent, Bernard, you make me tremble; tell me what all this means?"

When I told her of my experience she reproached me for not having warned her.

"I should not then have been afraid; I should have taken care not to be left alone with my father.

Now I shall be upon my guard. But the principal thing, dear Bernard, is to avoid all contact with that odious man, and to give him alms enough to rid us of him. You must not leave me again though, for I need you."

The next day the priest, at my express wish, set out for the convent to admonish the Trappist that if he ever came to the castle again I would have him thrown out of the window. I proposed to him to provide handsomely for his wants on condition that he leave at once and never set foot again in Berry. To his surprise, the enemy had changed his tactics. He indignantly refused all assistance, emphatically blaming his host, the prior, for having presumed to propose an exchange of eternal benefits for perishable ones.

Days and weeks passed by; the monk appeared neither at the castle nor in its neighborhood. Each morning some new virtue, some new act of austerity, of that holy personage was reported. He obstinately refused a thousand small gifts brought him by the devotees who wished to see him. At times he concealed himself so well that it was reported he had gone away, but at the moment when we were congratulating ourselves on being rid of him, we heard that he was inflicting frightful mortifications upon himself or that he had been walking barefooted through the wildest, most neglected

portions of La Varenne. It was even rumored that he could work miracles; if the prior was not cured of gout it was because he did not wish to be, from a sense of penitence.

Our uncertainty was of two months duration.

XXI

Those days of intimacy were to me blissful, yet tormenting. To see Edmee at all times—for she summoned me to her side to read to her, to converse with her, to help her care for her father, to be a part of her life as if I were her brother—was indeed a great yet dangerous delight, for the volcano was being rekindled in my bosom. Several confused words, several troubled glances, betrayed me. Edmee was inscrutable; her dark eyes, resting upon me with the same solicitude with which they rested upon her father, suddenly grew cold when the violence of my passion was about to burst forth. Her face expressed only curiosity and a steady purpose to penetrate the depths of my soul, but only allowing me to see the surface of hers.

I delighted in my sufferings at first, for it pleased me to offer them to Edmee in expiation of my past failings. I hoped she would divine them and be pleased; she did not remark upon them, however. My trouble increased. After a night of anguish I wrote her a senseless letter, worded thus:

"You do not love me, Edmee; you will never love

me—I know it. I ask nothing, I hope for nothing. I will remain near you, to consecrate my life to your service, your protection. I will do all in my power to be useful to you, but I shall suffer, and though I try to hide it, you will see it, and will perhaps attribute to other causes a sadness I cannot suppress. You wounded me deeply yesterday, by telling me to go out for *diversion*. Diversion away from you, Edmee? What bitter raillery! Do not be cruel, my poor sister, for then you become once more my imperious betrothed of those unhappy, by-gone days—and in spite of myself I shall become the brigand you detested. Ah, if you knew how unhappy I am! There are within me two men struggling incessantly and mortally—it is to be hoped that the brigand will succumb. If you knew, Edmee, what struggles, what combats, what tears of blood my heart distills and what transports are often aroused in that portion of my soul governed by rebellious spirits! Oh, heavens! in what disorder are my thoughts! Have pity upon me! Be patient; permit me to be sad, and never doubt my devotion. I am often mad, but I always love you. One word, one look from you, recalls my sense of duty. As I write to you, Edmee, the sky is overcast with dark and heavy clouds, the thunder roars, the lightning flashes! Ah, had my voice the power of the tempest, that I might express to you my agony

and my doubts! You have crushed me, but I submit, and do not try to raise the foot which the haughty conqueror has placed upon my fainting breast."

The remainder of the letter, which was disconnected and absurd from beginning to end, was written in the same strain.

It was not the first time I had written to Edmee, although living under the same roof with her, but this particular letter was bolder and more impassioned than any of my earlier effusions. After descending to the drawing-room and slipping it into Edmee's work-basket, I returned and cast myself upon the bed. Edmee did not seem to have found it, for she did not reply. I expected it would bring about a decisive explanation. I suspected the priest of having destroyed it; I accused Edmee of harshness and contempt.

The following day the weather was fine; my uncle took a drive, and on the way he told us that he did not wish to die without having once more witnessed a fox-hunt. He was passionately fond of that diversion, and his health was so much improved that his desires could be indulged. Since the Trappist's visit the knight seemed to have taken a new lease of life. As he insisted upon his project, Edmee and I promised to co-operate in organizing a company and to take an active part in the hunt

ourselves. It was the old man's chief delight to see her upon horseback, caracoling around his carriage and handing him all the blossoming branches she could break from the bushes as she passed.

It was decided that I should escort my cousin and that the priest accompany my uncle in the carriage. A repast was to be prepared for our return. Marcasse, whom I had appointed my steward at Roche-Mauprat, and who understood the science of a fox-hunt, spent two whole days in stopping up the burrows. Several neighboring farmers, interested in the hunt and capable of giving good advice, joined our party, and Patience, notwithstanding his prejudice against such sport, consented to follow as an amateur.

On the day appointed, which was warm and bright, fifty persons turned out with horns, horses, and dogs. Each of us was armed with a gun, and my uncle took one to aim from his carriage. For the first two hours Edmee, mounted on a pretty little mare, rambled along beside the carriage from which the knight gazed upon her affectionately. Then, yielding to her father's reiterated requests, she galloped off, inspired by the martial spirit of her family.

"Follow her, follow her!" cried the knight to me, for he no sooner saw her ride off than his paternal vanity was replaced by uneasiness. I did not need to be urged, and spurring on my horse, I

joined Edmee in a cross-road which she had taken in order to meet the hunters. I trembled as I saw her horse, excited by her, carry her into the midst of the copse with the swiftness of a flash of lightning.

"Edmee! for God's sake," I called to her, "do not ride so fast; you will kill yourself!"

"Let me ride," she said gayly; "my father has given me permission. Leave me in peace, I say—I will rap your fingers if you stop my horse."

"Let me at least follow you," said I; "your father asked me to, and I should kill myself were any misfortune to happen to you."

Why was I possessed with such sinister thoughts—I who had so often seen Edmee ride in the woods? I was in a peculiar condition—the heat had inflamed my brain, my nerves were strangely unstrung. Before setting out I had drunk several cups of coffee flavored with rum. At first I was frightened, then fear gave place to an inexplicable feeling of love and joy. My excitement became so uncontrollable that I felt as if I had no other aim than to pursue Edmee. One would have taken her for a fairy appearing in that wild spot to entice men to her perfidious retreat. I forgot the chase and all else; I saw only Edmee. My eyes grew dim—still I rode on. I was in a state of mute frenzy when she halted abruptly.

"What shall we do?" she asked; "I do not hear the huntsmen, and I see the river. We have struck out too far to the left."

"On the contrary, Edmee," said I, not knowing what I was giving utterance to, "another gallop and we will be with them."

"How red your face is!" she cried. "But how will we cross the river?"

"Since there is a road, there must be a ford," I replied. "On, on!" I cried. I was possessed with a mania to ride.

Edmee made a gesture of impatience. "These woods are horrible; I always lose my way," said she. Without doubt she recalled the day upon which she had been conducted to Roche-Mauprat, for I thought of it too. Mechanically I followed Edmee toward the river. Suddenly she was on the other side. I was furious on finding that her horse was more agile and courageous than mine. I spurred on my steed cruelly, and after several narrow escapes I reached the shore and started in Edmee's wake in blind fury. I overtook her, and seizing her mare's bridle, I cried:

"Stop, Edmee, I say! Do not go any farther!"

With those words I shook the reins so roughly that her horse reared. She lost her balance, and in order to save herself a fall, she lightly slipped between the two horses. I was on foot as quickly

as she was, and pushed back the horses. Edmee's, which was very gentle, began to browse; mine disappeared. This was all the work of an instant. I caught Edmee in my arms; she freed herself and said sharply:

"You are very rough, Bernard! What ails you?"

In my confusion I told her that I feared her mare was about to run away.

"And to save me you caused me to fall at the risk of killing me," she replied; "that was very kind indeed."

"Let me reseat you," said I. And without awaiting permission, I took her in my arms and lifted her from the ground.

"You know very well that I do not mount that way," she cried angrily. "Leave me; I do not require your services."

I did not obey her; I lost control over myself; my arms tightened around her waist—in vain did I try to disengage them. She turned pale with anger.

"How unfortunate I am," said I, my eyes filling with tears, "to always offend you and cause myself to be disliked more and more in proportion as my love increases!"

Edmee was of an imperious nature. Her character with years had acquired inflexible energy; she was no longer the trembling maiden whom I had clasped in my arms at Roche-Mauprat, but a bold,

haughty woman, who would rather be strangled than permit an audacious action. In addition to that she knew that she was beloved, and recognized her power; she therefore repulsed me disdainfully, and when I followed her she raised her whip and threatened to leave an ignominious mark on my face if I ever dared to touch her stirrup.

I fell upon my knees, beseeching her not to leave me without pardoning me. She was already upon her horse, and looking about her, she exclaimed:

"I did not wish to see this detested spot again. Look, sir! look where we are!"

In my turn I looked about me and saw that we were on the outskirts of the woods—on the edge of the Gazean pond. A few paces from us I saw the tower, the door of which gaped open behind the verdant foliage like a black cavern.

I again combatted against two instincts. Who can explain the workings of a man's brain when it wrestles with the senses—when one part of his being strives to suppress another? Such a struggle to an organization like mine was frightful, for do not imagine that the will plays a secondary role with passionate natures. It is absurd, however, to say to a man exhausted in combat of that kind, "You should have conquered yourself."

XXII

How can I explain to you my feelings at the sight of the Gazean Tower? I had only seen it twice in my life; twice I had witnessed there horrible scenes; but the third which was to be enacted on the same spot was the most horrible of all!

Standing erect before Edmee, who was preparing to leave me, furious at seeing her escape me for the third time, I gazed upon her wildly. I was pale, my fists were clinched. She never knew the peril she was in at that moment. I remember it with regret, but God alone can judge of it, for I triumphed, and that evil thought was my last. Seized with fear, I turned and fled in order not to yield to temptation. I had not cleared more than thirty paces when I heard a shot in the direction in which Edmee was. I halted, terror-stricken, I knew not why, for in the midst of a hunt a shot was nothing unusual. I was about to retrace my steps and rejoin Edmee at the risk of again offending her, when I fancied I heard a groan near the Gazean Tower. I was confused. It took me several moments to gain control over my senses; my brain was filled

with illusions which I could not distinguish from the reality. I groped my way along. Suddenly I came face to face with the priest; he was anxiously seeking Edmee. The knight not seeing his daughter among the hunters, had grown fearful and had sent the priest in search of her.

On seeing me pale, my hair in disorder, my eyes wild, without horse or gun (the latter I had dropped on the spot where I had almost fainted, and I had neglected to pick it up), he was as much frightened as I was, without knowing the reason any more than did I.

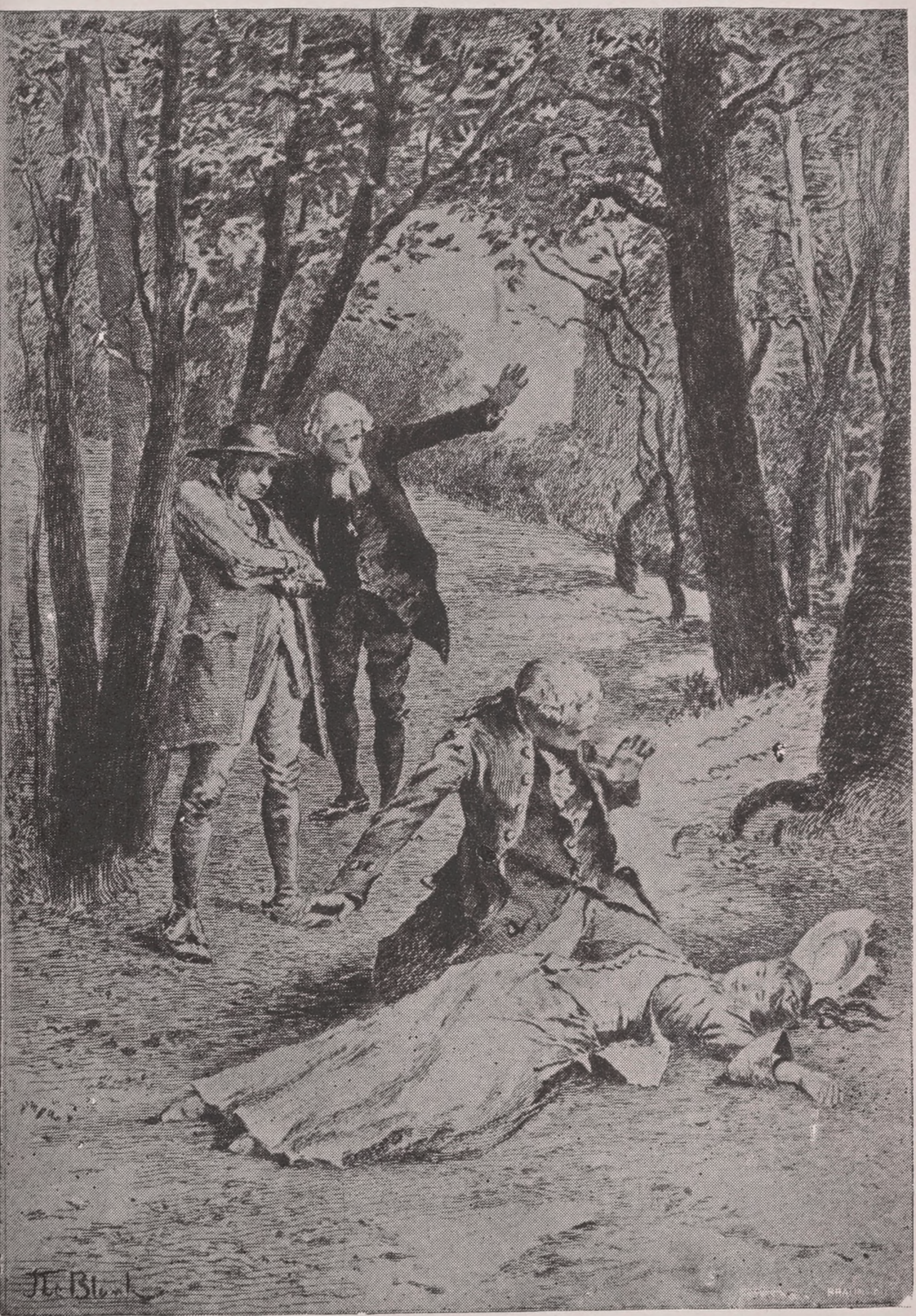
"Edmee," he said; "where is Edmee?"

I replied incoherently.

He was dismayed to see me in such a condition, and inwardly accused me of a crime, which he confessed to me later.

"Unhappy boy!" he said, shaking my arm to recall me to myself; "be calm, be sensible, I implore you!"

I did not understand him, but I dragged him toward the fatal path. Oh, horrible sight! Edmee was stretched on the ground bathed in her blood; her horse was browsing several paces from her. Patience was standing near her, his arms crossed upon his breast, his face livid and his heart so full that it was impossible for him to reply to the priest, who interrogated him with sobs and tears.



As for me, I could not comprehend what had taken place; I think my brain was paralyzed. I knelt upon the ground beside Edmee, whose breast was pierced by two bullets. I looked at her dim eyes in a state of absolute stupidity.

"Take away that miserable fellow!" at length said Patience to the priest, casting upon me a contemptuous glance.

"Edmee! Edmee!" cried the priest, falling upon the grass and trying to stanch the blood with his handkerchief.

"Dead! dead!" said Patience; "and there is the murderer! She said so on giving up her soul to God, and Patience will be her avenger! It is very hard, but it must be! God must wish it, since I was by to hear the truth."

"It is horrible! it is horrible!" cried the priest.

I heard the sound of that last word and smiled with a bewildered air as I repeated it. The huntsmen rode up; Edmee was carried away. I thought I saw her father walking about, and should have believed it a dream had I not been told afterward that the knight left his carriage without any aid; that he walked about and gave orders with as much strength and presence of mind as a young man. The following day, however, he fell into a state of complete childishness and insensibility, and never again left his couch.

What happened to me I do not know. When I regained consciousness I found that I was in another path in the forest, near a small waterfall, the murmur of which I heard with a sense of satisfaction. Blaireau was asleep at my feet, and his master, leaning against a tree, was watching me attentively, while the setting sun gilded the tree-tops; the wild flowers seemed to smile at me and the birds to sing melodiously.

"What a magnificent evening!" said I to Marcasse; "this spot is as lovely as any American forest. Well, my friend, what are you doing? you should have awakened me sooner—I have had horrible dreams."

Marcasse came and knelt by my side; tears trickled down his sallow, withered cheeks. There was upon his usually impassive face an expression of ineffable pity, of sorrow and of love.

"Poor master!" said he, "frenzy; madness, that is all! How unfortunate! Fidelity cannot cure! With you forever—if necessary, to die with you!"

His tears, his words saddened me; but it was the result of sympathetic instinct, for I remembered nothing. I cast myself into his arms, weeping like him, and he pressed me to his breast. I had a presentiment that some terrible misfortune was hanging over me, but I dreaded to learn in what it consisted, and for nothing in the world

would I have questioned him. He took my arm and led me through the forest; I suffered myself to be led like a chlid, but he had to let me rest for half an hour, owing to a return of my weakness. At length he assisted me to rise and succeeded in guiding me to Roche-Mauprat, where we arrived very late. Marcasse told me afterward that I was for a time delirious. He took upon himself to send to the nearest village for a barber to shave my head. "Dead, dead, dead!" was the only word I could articulate. I groaned and tossed upon my bed. I wanted to rise and make my way to Sainte-Severe; my poor sergeant threw himself at my feet in order to prevent me. In one of those struggles my wound reopened, and I returned quietly to my bed without attracting his notice. I fell into a deep swoon, and was almost dying when, seeing my purple cheeks and lips, he raised the coverlets and found me weltering in my blood. For several days I was unconscious. When consciousness returned and I had partaken of some food, Marcasse perceiving that with strength sadness and anxiety again weighed heavily upon me, he told me carefully and tenderly that Edmee was not dead, and that the doctors did not even despair of her life.

That revelation shocked me, for I had believed that horrible adventure the work of my delirium. I began to lament and wring my hands. Marcasse,

upon his knees at my bedside, implored me to calm myself, and repeated these words, to me so destitute of sense:

"You did not do it on purpose, I know—no, you did not do it on purpose. It is a piece of ill-luck to have a gun go off accidentally in one's hand."

"What are you saying?" I cried impatiently; "what gun? what accident? Why me?"

"Do you not know then how she was shot, master?"

I put my hands to my head as if to bring back life and energy, and not being able to explain the mysterious event, I thought I must be mad, and maintained silence, fearing lest a word might escape me that would prove the loss of my faculties.

By degrees I regained my memory. I asked for wine to strengthen me, and scarcely had I taken a few drops than all the scenes of that fatal day passed before me as if by magic. I even remembered the words I had heard Patience utter soon after the accident. For a moment I was uncertain; I asked myself if my gun had gone off in my hands as I was leaving Edmee. I remembered clearly that I had discharged it an hour before to bring down a bird, whose plumage Edmee wished to see more closely. Quite satisfied that I was not the cause of that sad accident, an explanation of the affair remained to be found. I extorted the truth from

Marcasse; he told me that the knight and all the participants in the chase attributed the misfortune to a casualty—to an explosion of my fire-arms when my horse threw me—for they thought I had been thrown. One person alone accused me—that person was Patience; but he accused me only in secret, and under the seal of a vow made before his two friends, Marcasse and the priest Aubert.

"I need not tell you," said Marcasse, "that the priest will maintain silence, and that he refuses to believe you guilty. As for me, I swear that never—"

"Be silent," I said to him; "do not say that; that would be to suppose that some one believes it. But Edmee said something to Patience at the moment she expired; for she is dead—you cannot deceive me; she is dead—I shall never see her more!"

"She is not dead!" cried Marcasse, as he made vows which convinced me. Edmee's words he refused to repeat to me, and by that I knew that they were overwhelming. Then I rose from my bed; I repulsed Marcasse, who tried to detain me. I had a horse saddled and set off at a gallop. I looked like a specter when I reached the castle. I proceeded to the drawing-room, meeting no one but Saint-Jean, who uttered a cry of terror on perceiving me, and who disappeared without replying to my questions. The drawing-room was empty. My uncle's arm-chair no longer stood in the corner

by the fire-place; my portrait, which I had had taken in Philadelphia, and which I had sent home during the American War, had been taken from the wall.

I left that room and ascended the stairs, despair in my soul. I went direct to Edmee's room, and entered as soon as I had knocked. Mlle. Leblanc came to meet me, screamed and fled, hiding her face in her hands, as if she had seen a wild beast.

What could have caused such dread of me? Had the priest been disloyal to me? I learned later that Edmee, while declaring me innocent in her lucid moments, had accused me in her delirium.

I approached her bed, and not dreaming that an unexpected sight of me could give her a shock, I drew the curtains eagerly and gazed upon her. Her large black eyes were larger and more brilliant, although expressionless. I had never seen beauty more surpassing; her cheeks were colorless, her lips were as white as her cheeks, giving her face a statuesque appearance. She stared at me fixedly, with as little emotion as if she were looking at a painting or a piece of furniture; then she turned away her head with a mysterious smile.

I fell upon my knees, I seized her hand, I covered it with kisses, I burst into tears; she noticed nothing; her impassive, icy hand lay in mine like a piece of alabaster.

XXIII

The priest entered and greeted me with a distant, mournful air; then drawing me from the bedside, he said:

"You are a madman! Return home; be prudent enough not to come here—that is all that is left for you to do."

"And since when," I cried in a transport of fury, "have you the right to drive me from the bosom of my family?"

"Alas! you have no family!" he replied with an accent of sadness which disarmed me; "of father and daughter there only remain two phantoms, whose moral life is extinct and whose physical life will soon be. Respect the last moments of those who have cherished you."

"And how can I show my respect by abandoning them?" I asked in amazement.

"In that respect," said the priest, "I shall not need to tell you, for you know that your presence here is rash and polluting. Go! when they are no more, if you have any claims on this house you can return; you will certainly not find me here to op-

pose or confirm them. In the meantime I take the liberty of having those two respected to the last."

"Miserable man!" I cried; "I can scarcely resist tearing you limb from limb! What abominable caprice impels you to attack me thus cruelly? Do you think I should survive such a misfortune? Do you not know that three coffins will leave this house at the same time? Do you think that I have come to ask anything but one last glance, one last blessing?"

"Say one last *pardon*," said the priest.

"I say that you are insane!" I cried, "and that if you were not a priest I would punish you for speaking to me in such a manner."

"I do not fear you, sir," he said. "But I am sorry that you confirm by your menaces and your passion the accusations hanging over your head. Were you repentant, I would weep with you, but your assurance horrifies me. Until now I only saw in you a madman; to-day I see a villain. Go!"

I sank into a chair, almost suffocated with rage and pain. For a moment I wished for death! Edmee expiring near me, and before me a judge imbued with such convictions that, though gentle and charitable by nature, he became harsh and implacable!

The loss of her whom I loved made me despair,

but the knowledge of the accusations against me aroused my energy. I did not for a moment think that such an accusation would hold its ground against the truth. I fancied that a word from me would suffice. But I was so startled, so wounded, that that means of defense vanished, and the more the opprobrium of suspicion weighed upon me, the more I perceived the impossibility of establishing my innocence with only my own knowledge of it for defense. I was overcome, and could not utter a sound.

The door opened, and Mlle. Leblanc, approaching me with a stiff and scornful air, said that some one wished to speak to me on the stairs. I left the room mechanically and found Patience awaiting me, his arms crossed and with an expression upon his face which would have inspired me with respect and awe had I been guilty.

"M. de Mauprat, I must have a word with you; will you accompany me to my cottage?"

"Yes," I replied. "I will suffer all these humiliations, provided that I find out what is wanted with me and why it pleases every one to insult the most unfortunate of men. Come, Patience, and walk quickly, for I am in haste to return hither."

Patience preceded me, and when we reached his cottage we saw my poor sergeant, who had also just arrived. Not finding any horse on which to fol-

low me, and not wishing to leave me alone, he had come on foot so rapidly that he was bathed in perspiration. He rose from the bench upon which he had seated himself and approached us.

"Patience!" he cried in a dramatic tone which would have made me smile had I felt in such a humor. "Old fool!—a slanderer at your age! Fie, sir! Corrupted by fortune—you are—yes."

Patience, unmoved, shrugged his shoulders and said to his friend:

"Marcasse, you do not know what you say. Go, lie down in the orchard. You have no business here; I desire to speak with your master alone. Go; I wish it," he added, pushing him with an authority to which the sergeant, although proud and sensitive, yielded from force of habit.

When we were alone, Patience proceeded to interrogate me, to which interrogation I resolved to submit in order to obtain some light upon that which was taking place around me.

"Will you tell me, sir," he said, "what you intend to do now?"

"I intend to remain with my relatives," I replied, "as long as I have relatives; and when they are no more, what I shall do concerns no one."

"But, sir," resumed Patience, "if you are told that you cannot remain with your relatives with-

out giving a death-blow to either one or the other, would you still persist in remaining?"

"If I was convinced of that," I said, "I would not let them see me; I would wait without their doors until their death or recovery, to ask of them once again the affection I have not ceased to merit."

"Ah, is that so?" said Patience, with a disdainful smile. "I did not think that!"

"What do you mean?" I exclaimed. "Speak, wretch! explain yourself."

"No one but you is a wretch," said he, coldly.

I wanted an explanation at any price. I restrained myself, and had even the humility to say that I would listen to good counsel if he would consent to repeat to me the words Edmee had uttered directly after the accident, and those, too, which she had spoken in her delirium.

"Certainly not," said Patience, sternly. "You are not worthy to hear a word spoken by those lips, and I will not repeat them to you! Why do you want to know them? Do you hope to hide something from men? God has seen you—there are no secrets from Him. Go, remain at Roche-Mauprat quietly, and when your uncle is dead, when your affairs are settled, leave the country. If you listen to me you will leave it at once. I will not have you followed. But before two days are

over, a careless word spoken in public, a servant's indiscretion, might arouse the law, and from there to the scaffold, if one is guilty, there is but one step. I do not despise you—I have indeed loved you; listen to good advice. Go, now, or hide yourself and hold yourself in readiness for flight. I do not seek your ruin—nor would Edmee desire it."

"You are mad to think that I would listen to such advice. I hide myself! I fly like a guilty man!—you cannot mean it! I will brave everything. I do not know what possesses, what leagues you against me. I do not know why you wish to prevent me from seeing my uncle and cousin, but I scorn your folly. My place is here, and I will only leave at my uncle's or cousin's orders, and I must hear those orders from their lips, for I will receive no message through another. Therefore, many thanks for your wisdom, Monsieur Patience—mine will suffice. My compliments!"

I was preparing to leave the cottage when he rushed toward me, and I saw that for a moment he was disposed to employ force to detain me. In spite of his advanced age, he was a very Hercules. However, he restrained himself, and placing his hand upon my arm in one of those accesses of tenderness to which he was subject in times of his greatest harshness, he looked at me affectionately and said gently:

"Unhappy boy! you whom I have loved as my child—for I looked upon you as Edmee's brother—do not rush to your destruction! I supplicate you in the name of her whom you have assassinated and whom you love still, but whom you can see no more. Your family was only yesterday a superb craft, whose rudder you steered; to-day it is stranded, and has neither sails nor pilot. Now, poor castaway, do not persist in drowning yourself; I offer you the rope, take it—one day more and it will be too late. Remember that if the law lays hold of you, he who to-day tries to save you will to-morrow be obliged to accuse and condemn you. Do not force me to a deed the thought of which causes my tears to flow. Bernard, my child, you have been loved—think of the past!"

I burst into tears, and the sergeant, entering at that moment, wept too, and begged me to return to Roche-Mauprat. I arose and said to both men:

"I know that you are kind and love me well, for, believing me guilty of a horrible crime, you desire to save my life; but make yourselves easy, sirs. I am innocent, and I wish to have it proved that I am. I owe it to my family to live until my honor is re-established; then, if I am destined to see my cousin die, as I have only her to love upon earth, I will send a bullet through my brain. Why then should I be cast down? I do not cling to life.

May God render peaceful and calm the last hours of her whom I shall certainly not survive! That is all I ask."

Patience shook his head with a gloomy and discontented air. He was so positive of my guilt that my denials only served to alienate his sympathy. Marcasse loved me as well. But I was the only guarantee of my innocence.

"If you return to the castle, you must swear here that you will not enter your cousin's or your uncle's room without the priest's permission," cried Patience.

"I swear that I am innocent," replied I, "and that I will not be convicted of guilt by any one. Let me go! Patience, if you think it your duty to denounce me, do so; all that I ask is that I be not condemned without a hearing. I prefer the law tribunal to the tribunal of popular opinion."

I passed out of the cottage and returned to the castle. Not wishing to make a scene before the servants, and knowing that they could not hide from me Edmee's condition, I sought the room I had formerly occupied. But as I left it, toward evening, to inquire after the two invalids, Mlle. Leblanc again informed me that some one was awaiting me without.

I perceived upon her face a mixture of satisfaction and fear. I divined that they had come to arrest

me, and I had misgivings that Mlle. Leblanc had denounced me. I walked to the window and saw the marshal's officers in the court-yard.

"Very well," said I, "my fate must be decided."

But before leaving that house, perhaps forever—that house in which I left my heart—I wanted to see Edmee for the last time. I went to her room. Mlle. Leblanc tried to bar the way, but I pushed her aside and entered. I found there the priest and physician. I listened silently to what the latter was saying. I heard that the wounds were not mortal of themselves—that they would not even be serious, unless some shock to her mind should complicate the difficulty and bring on tetanus. As a result of wounds received in battle, I had seen many persons in America die from that terrible disease. I approached the bed. The priest was so dismayed he did not think of preventing me. I took Edmee's hand, still cold and inanimate. I kissed it, and without addressing a word to the other inmates of the room, I went downstairs and surrendered to the marshal.

XXIV

I was at once imprisoned. The following day some one was sent to the village of Sainte-Severe and to the farms in the vicinity of the forest of Curat, where the accident had taken place, to take the depositions of more than thirty witnesses. Had I been independent enough, had any one taken an interest in me, many violations of the law which took place at that time and during my trial could have been used in my favor to have proven that secret hatred formed the ground-work of the whole affair.

At the first examination only one charge was heard against me, that of Mlle. Leblanc. While all the huntsmen swore that they knew nothing about the matter, and had no reason to regard the accident as a voluntary deed, Mlle Leblanc, who hated me for several jokes I had played upon her, and who, moreover, had been bribed, as we discovered later, swore that Edmee on reviving the first time had been entirely free from fever, and had confided in her, at the same time binding her to secrecy, that she had been threatened, thrown from her horse,

and finally assaulted by me. That wretched woman, in repeating Edmee's delirious ravings, formed a plausible story which she embellished in proportion to her hatred of me. Misrepresenting her mistress' vague wanderings, she affirmed upon oath that Edmee had seen me point my gun at her as I said: "I have told you that you should only die by my hand."

Saint-Jean, examined the same day, swore that he knew nothing except what Mlle. Leblanc had told him the night of the occurrence, and his story conformed exactly with the preceding testimony. He said that I had always been peculiar; that I was subject to fits of aberration; that many times, when suffering from such attacks, I had talked of blood and of murder to a person whom I fancied I saw; and lastly, that I had so violent a temper that I was capable of throwing anything at a person's head, though to his knowledge he had never seen me indulge in an excess of that kind. Such depositions often decide life or death in a case such as that was.

Patience, on the day of inquiry, was not to be found. The priest stated that his ideas of the affair were so uncertain that he must have more time to inquire into it; a delay was granted him.

Marcasse said that if I had caused Mlle. de Mauprat's wounds, which he very much doubted, I

had at least caused them involuntarily. He would pledge his honor and his life on that assertion. Such were the results of the first inquiry.

It was continued several days, and many false witnesses swore that they had seen me shoot Mlle. de Mauprat The case, carried to the criminal court at Bourges, was to come up in a few days. You can imagine my despair. Edmee's condition became more and more deplorable; her reason was completely overthrown. I was not anxious as to the issue of my case; I did not think it would be possible to convict me of a crime I had not committed; but of what value were honor and life to me if Edmee was not to be near me? I looked upon her as dead, as cursing me with her dying breath! I had decided to kill myself after my sentence, whatever it might be. Had it not been for the zeal of my lawyer and the admirable devotion of Marcasse, my lack of interest would have ruined my life.

Marcasse spent his time exerting himself in my interests. At night he lay upon a straw pallet at my feet, and after having given me the news of Edmee and my uncle, whom he saw daily, he told me the result of his expeditions. I pressed his hand tenderly, but the greater part of the time, absorbed in what he was telling me of Edmee, I did not hear what he said. For some time Marcasse had felt certain that Edmee's life had been attempted

by Jean de Mauprat. That might be; but as I had no possibility of turning it to account, I ordered him to be silent when he spoke of it. I did not like the thought of clearing myself at the expense of others.

I persisted in believing that one of the huntsmen had inadvertently shot Edmee, and that a feeling of shame and fear prevented him from avowing the accident. Marcasse made so bold as to call upon all those who had taken part in the chase, and to beg them with all the eloquence in his power not to shun the punishment of an involuntary crime, and not to permit an innocent person to suffer from the results of such a deed.

All his steps were fruitless, and my poor friend found no means of solving the mystery enshrouding the affair.

I was transferred to Bourges, to the ancient stronghold of the Dukes of Berry. It was a great trial to me to be separated from my faithful attendant. They would have permitted him to accompany me, but he feared he might soon after be arrested at the instigation of my enemies, and that he might then be unable to serve me.

Two days after my removal to Bourges, Marcasse produced a document drawn up, at his request, by two notaries of Chatre, from the depositions of ten witnesses; which document stated that many days

before the accident a mendicant friar had been seen rambling in the woods; that he had been lodged at Notre Dame de Pauligny the night before the sad occurrence. Marcasse claimed that the monk was Jean de Mauprat; two women testified that they recognized in him either Jean or Gaucher de Mauprat. Those depositions, far from being favorable to me, made a bad impression, and were prejudicial to my defense.

The Trappist was successful in proving an alibi and in circulating the report that I was an infamous knave. It was a time of triumph for Jean de Mauprat; for no one dared to prosecute a man as holy as he led every one to believe he was. In his depositions, Marcasse related the mysterious apparition of the Trappist at Roche-Mauprat, his intrusion into M. Hubert's apartments, and his efforts, through the prior, to obtain large sums of money. All this was treated as a romance, for Marcasse had never witnessed any of the apparitions, and neither the knight nor his daughter were in a condition to give evidence. My replies, it is true, confirmed those statements, but as I said with perfect sincerity that for two months the Trappist had not caused me any anxiety, and as I refused to attribute the crime to him, it seemed for several days that he would be permanently re-established in popular opinion.

Patience could have served my enemies had he wished to, convinced as he was of my guilt, but he did not do so. He had resumed his wandering life, and without actually concealing himself, he was never to be found. Marcasse could not comprehend such conduct, while the officers of the law were furious at being thus evaded.

XXV

The important day arrived. I repaired to the court-room calmly, but the sight of the crowd depressed me. I had among those faces no sympathy, no support; upon all of them I saw only unfeeling and impertinent curiosity. The village maidens remarked upon my youth and good looks; a number of fashionable and aristocratic ladies in striking costumes were in the galleries; several capuchins were among the people.

The examinations began with the emphatic solemnity which characterizes such an occasion. My replies baffled the hopes of the curious; to those concerning my childhood and education, I replied that I was not in the prisoner's dock to take the part of an accuser; to those which related to Edmee, and the nature of my sentiments toward and relations with her, I replied that Mlle. de Mauprat's reputation would not admit of questions as to the nature of her relations with any man; to those which aimed to draw from me an avowal of the crime of which I was accused, I replied that I was not even its involuntary author. I returned

monosyllabic replies, when possible, to all questions on events preceding the accident. They tried to represent that I had led Edmee purposely, by artifice or force, into that secluded spot, in order to kill her and to avoid discovery and punishment.

The excitement was at its height when the Trappist, coming suddenly from the crowd, in a theatrical manner approached the bar, boldly saying that he was a miserable sinner, worthy of insult, but that on that occasion he considered it his duty to furnish an example of frankness and simplicity by offering to put himself to all the tests which could enlighten the minds of the judges.

The audience fairly stamped for joy. The Trappist was led into the center of the court and confronted with the witnesses, who all declared without hesitation that the monk they had seen wore the same garb and bore a faint resemblance to him, but that he was undoubtedly not the same man. The issue of that incident scored another triumph for the Trappist. I remembered at that moment that at the priest's first interview with Jean de Mauprat, at the spring, the latter had mentioned a "brother in religion," who was traveling with him. I communicated that reminiscence to my advocate, and he conferred with the priest, who was among the witnesses and who recalled the circumstance.

When his turn for examination arrived, he turned toward me with an air of anguish, his eyes filled with tears, and he replied with difficulty in a low voice, in these words:

"We were in the woods when M. Hubert de Mauprat asked me to leave the carriage and go in search of his daughter Edmee, who had wandered away from the hunters and had been gone so long a time that he was anxious about her. I walked quite a distance, and thirty paces from the Gazean Tower I found M. Bernard de Mauprat in great confusion. I had just heard a shot; I saw that he had not his gun; he had thrown it (after discharging it, as has been stated) several paces from him. Together we hastened to Mlle. de Mauprat, whom we found upon the ground, pierced by two bullets. The man who was there before us, and who was near by at that instant, alone can tell us what words passed her lips. She was unconscious when I saw her."

"But you heard those words later," said the chief-justice; "for a bond of friendship exists between you and that learned peasant called Patience."

The priest hesitated, and then asked if the law had a right to ask a man to reveal a secret intrusted to him, and to cause him to break his vow.

"You have taken an oath here to speak the truth,

the whole truth; you must know if that vow is not more binding and solemn than the one you made before it."

"But if I received that confidence under the seal of a confession, you would certainly not exhort me to reveal it?"

"It is a long time," said the justice, "since you have confessed any one, sir!"

That personal attack aroused the priest's obstinacy.

"Everything considered, I think I will be silent, for my conscience bids me."

"Aubert," angrily cried the counsel for the crown, "you apparently are ignorant of the penalties the law inflicts upon witnesses who conduct themselves as you have!"

"I am not."

"And your intention is to brave them?"

"I will undergo them if necessary."

"Very well—do you persist in this system of silence?"

"I shall tell you nothing," replied the priest.

"In virtue of my power," said the chief-justice, "I order that Aubert be arrested and imprisoned."

The priest allowed himself to be led quietly away. The public was inspired with respect, and the most profound silence reigned in the assembly.

Of all the witnesses called, Mlle. Leblanc was the

most audacious. I was surprised to find the woman so bitter against me. She had, too, very powerful weapons with which to injure me. By virtue of listening at doors and obtaining all the family secrets from the lackeys, subject to exaggerations and misrepresentations, she managed to gather as many harmful facts as she could in order to ruin me.

She told of my arrival at Sainte-Severe in Mlle. de Mauprat's train. "But at what price," she added, "did this wretched bandit save my mistress? Owing to her disgrace she broke her engagement with M. de la Marche and refused all offers of marriage. She would at first have committed suicide, had I not taken her hunting-knife from her; she feared this young man's persecutions, and even bolted her door at night. In proportion as this fellow became more civilized and better educated, she treated him more kindly. She even nursed him during his illness, not because she loved and 'esteemed' him, as M. Marcasse said in his 'version,' but because she feared that in his delirium he might betray her secret. When they wintered in Paris, M. Bernard became jealous, despotic, and threatened to kill M. de la Marche, whom Mademoiselle was forced to dismiss. Violent scenes with Bernard followed, and he left for America. On his return, six years later, he seemed changed;

but being thrown with his cousin constantly, his passion was reawakened and he *lost his head*, so to speak! He cried and raved at night, and wrote her such letters that she did not reply to them. Here is one that I found in her pocket after the terrible accident; it has been torn by a bullet and saturated in blood, but one can read enough of it to see that. 'Monsieur' often entertained thoughts of violence in connection with Mademoiselle!"

She laid the letter upon the table. Before it was read, she concluded her testimony with assertions which greatly perplexed me, for I could not distinguish between their truth and perfidy.

"Since her accident," she said, "Mademoiselle has been between life and death. She will never rise from her bed, although they think she will; but I understand her illness better than the doctors; they say her wounds will heal, but her mind will be unsettled; I say her mind is all right, but that her wounds are fatal. She is rarely delirious, but when she is, it is in the presence of the doctors, who annoy her; when alone with Saint-Jean, the priest, or me, she is perfectly rational—she then speaks of her would-be murderer with a truly Christian charity, and says many times a day: 'May God pardon him in the other life as I pardon him in this! I was wrong not to marry him; he would perhaps have made me happy. I drove him to despair,

and he was revenged upon me. Dear Leblanc, never betray the secret I have confided in you—a careless word might lead him to the scaffold, and that would kill my father.' The poor girl does not dream that matters have come to this; that I have been summoned by the law to tell that which I should keep secret. What consoles me is that all can be easily kept from the knight, who is childish. I have only done my duty, as God is my judge!"

Amid a murmur of approbation Mlle. Leblanc seated herself, and the reading of the letter found upon Edmee began. It was the one I had written to her several days before the accident. They handed it to me. I glanced at the handwriting and calmly declared it to be mine. When it had been read, a smile of delight was visible upon the faces of my enemies. My defense was shocked, and even poor Marcasse looked at me in despair.

The public had already condemned me. Then the counsel for the Crown made his speech, and summed me up as an incorrigible rascal.

Although my lawyer was an able man, the letter had surprised him to such an extent, and the audience was so ill-disposed toward me, that his address sounded weak. He put forth that he was deprived of all means of defense by the refusal of a short delay, and he ventured to say boldly that there was

an evil purpose in such haste. The judge called him to order. The jury retired to deliberate, and at the end of half an hour returned and rendered a verdict against me, condemning me to capital punishment.

XXVI

I received that unexpected blow with great composure. I no longer cared for anything on earth. I told myself that if Edmee died I should meet her in the better land; that if she lived and recovered her reason, a day of enlightenment would come, and I should live in her heart as a cherished memory. Irritable as I was by nature, I was astonished at my philosophical resignation and at the haughty silence I maintained.

Suddenly, at the moment when the court was about to adjourn, a form in tatters, barefooted, with a long beard, disheveled hair, an austere face and somber, impressive eyes, appeared in the midst of the crowd, and turning toward the bar, said in a hollow voice:

"I, Jean La Houx," said Patience, "object to that sentence as unjust and illegal. I demand that it be set aside, in order that I can give my evidence, which is extremely necessary and which should be heard."

"If you had anything to say," cried the counsel for the Crown angrily, "why did you not present

yourself when you were called? You are imposing upon the court by pretending that you have evidence to give."

"And you," replied Patience in a hollow voice, very slowly, "are imposing upon the public by saying I have not. You know very well that I have."

"Witness, remember where you are and to whom you are speaking!"

"I know that well. I know that I have important matters to relate and that I would have related them in time, had you not *forced* the case. I wish to tell them, and intend to do so. I believe, too, that it will be better for me to tell them, so that the proceedings can be reconsidered. It will be better for the judges than for the condemned, for the latter will revive by honor at the moment that the others die of infamy."

"Witness," said the magistrate, "the insolence of your language will be more hurtful than advantageous to the accused."

"Who has told you that I will be favorable to the accused?" roared Patience in a voice of thunder. "What do you know of me? Suppose it pleases me to contend that an illegal sentence can be irrevocable?"

"How can you reconcile that desire to respect the law with the infraction you have committed in not appearing when you were summoned?"

"Simply by this—that I did not want to."

"There are severe penalties attached to such breaches of the law."

"Possibly."

"Have you come to-day with the intention of submitting to the laws?"

"I have come to force you to respect them."

"I warn you that if you do not alter your mode of speech, I will have you committed to jail."

"I warn you that if you respect God and justice, you will listen to me and suspend the execution of the sentence."

He turned to the people assembled and addressed them with chivalrous impetuosity.

"Join me, O, ye people, in embracing the defense of the truth! Fall upon your knees, my children; my brethren, pray that justice may be done and wrath averted. It is your duty, your right, and your interest; it is you who are injured and threatened when the laws are violated."

A furious clamor arose; Patience, conscious of his power, forgot personal prejudice in the common right. Thus at times a noble impulse and a true word suffice to reclaim the masses misled by long sophisms.

The reprieve was granted and I was conducted to my cell amidst a storm of applause. Marcasse

followed me. Patience, avoiding recognition, disappeared.

The revision of my case could only take place by an order of the King. Before my sentence I had decided to let matters take their course, but afterward Patience inspired me as he did the spectators; my sense of justice was aroused and I spent the remainder of the night devising means for establishing my innocence.

With that feeling of strength came that of hope. "Edmee may perhaps recover—who knows?" said I to myself; "she may have sent Patience to my aid."

But how was the order to be obtained? who would solicit it? The priest alone could help me; he had proved during the trial that he was my friend—but he was in prison. What could humble Marcasse do with his enigmatical speech?

I feel asleep trusting to Providence, whose aid I had fervently evoked. Several hours' sleep refreshed me, and I opened my eyes as the bolts of my door were drawn. What was my delight on seeing Arthur, into whose arms I rushed. He had heard in Paris, whither he had been called in the interests of science, of the sad affair in which I was implicated, and he had not lost any time in hastening to aid or comfort me.

I begged him to go to Sainte-Severe to obtain

news of Edmee, of whom I had heard nothing for four days. He consented, saying that from there he would leave for Paris.

On the third day he wrote me a lengthy, detailed letter. Edmee was in a very peculiar condition. She did not speak, and did not seem to suffer as long as she was exposed to no nervous excitement, but at the first word that could recall the memory of her misfortunes, she fell into convulsions.

The moral isolation in which she was held was the greatest obstacle to her recovery. She had two good physicians and excellent nurses. Mlle. Leblanc also waited upon her, but that dangerous woman often harmed her by her imprudent remarks and questions.

Arthur assured me that if Edmee had thought me guilty, it must have been in an earlier phase of her malady; for the past two weeks she had been in a state of inertia. She replied to all questions by signs. Her affection for her father, however, still existed, though all other love seemed to have passed away. She often shed tears. In vain did they try to make her comprehend that her father was not dead. They rolled the knight's chair into her room, but father and daughter did not recognize one another. She had taken Arthur for a physician, and treated him as indifferently as the rest of her attendants. He had not dared to speak to her of me,

but he bade me not to despair. Edmee's condition was such that time and quiet would cure her, for she had in her favor youth and an admirable constitution. He implored me to take care of myself, for I might be useful to Edmee.

In two weeks Arthur returned from Paris with the King's order for a repetition of my trial. Again witnesses were examined.

Patience did not appear, but I received a slip of paper from him containing these words: "You are not guilty, therefore hope."

The doctors agreed that Mlle. de Mauprat could be examined without danger, but that her replies would be of no value. She was in better health; she had recognized her father and would not leave his side; but she understood nothing apart from that. She seemed to take a great delight in caring for the old man, who from time to time knew his daughter. When questioned, however, Edmee merely shrugged her shoulders and evinced a desire to be left in peace. Arthur did not lose courage. When that was related to him he said he would bring about a favorable crisis in Edmee's intellectual faculties. He left at once for Sainte-Severe, where he remained several days without writing to me, thereby causing me great anxiety.

The priest, re-examined, persisted in his calm and laconic refusal. My judges, seeing that the

information promised by Patience did not arrive, hastened the review of my case, giving by that action a fresh proof of their animosity toward me.

The day set arrived. I was a prey to uneasiness. Arthur had written me to hope in a style as laconic as that of Patience. My lawyer had been unable to obtain any helpful evidence. I could see that he began to think me culpable. His only hope was in delay.

XXVII

The assembly was larger on that particular day than it had been before. It required an effort on my part to appear composed. I was sensible of nothing that was taking place around me, except that a door opened behind the tribunal and Arthur entered, supporting a lady, whose veil he raised after seating her; that a murmur of admiration was heard in the assembly when the pale, delicate face of Edmee was disclosed. At that moment I forgot the throng, my cause—the entire world. I rushed forward and fell at her feet. They told me afterward that ladies wept, and even the lawyers were affected. For some time Edmee stared vacantly at me. Suddenly she burst into tears, threw her arms about my neck and fainted. She was borne out of the room; with difficulty was I induced to return to my seat.

Arthur, turning to the court, demanded that the invalid's condition be confirmed by the doctors who had examined her that morning. He too requested, and his request was granted, that Edmee be called as a witness and confronted with me,

when she revived from her swoon. As Arthur withdrew, Patience entered. He was neatly attired, but after several words he declared that he could not continue if he were not permitted to take off his coat—it annoyed him; he scarcely awaited permission to cast that mark of civilization upon the ground, then he said:

"I will tell the truth, the whole truth. I swear before God and man to tell what I know, as I know it, without being influenced for or against any one."

This time his voice was loud and penetrating; he spoke clearly and concisely:

"When Mlle. de Mauprat was shot, I was not ten paces away. I was of the hunting party, but taking little interest in the chase, I wandered off, and finding that I was in the vicinity of the Gazean Tower, in which I lived twenty years, I felt a desire to revisit my old habitation. I had reached it when I heard a shot. I was not startled, for I attributed it to one of the huntsmen; but when I emerged from the thicket I found Edmee kneeling upon the ground, wounded, and grasping the bridle of her horse. She did not know to what an extent she was wounded, but her other hand clutched her breast as she cried:

"'Bernard, it is terrible! I would never have believed you capable of killing me! Bernard, where

are you? Come to see me die. You have killed my father!'

"With those words she fell; I rushed toward her. 'Ah, did you see him, Patience? Do not speak of it; do not tell my father.' She spoke no more until the bullet had been extracted."

"Did you see Bernard Mauprat?"

"I saw him arrive upon the spot just as Edmee lost consciousness; he was like a madman. I thought he was remorseful, and spoke harshly to him. He did not reply, but seated himself beside his cousin. No one thought of accusing him; they assumed that he had fallen from his horse and that his gun had discharged as he fell. Several days afterward Edmee talked, but she was delirious. I claim that she confided in no one (in Mlle. Leblanc least of all) what passed between her and M. de Mauprat before the shooting took place. In rare moments of lucidity she replied to our questions by saying that Bernard had certainly not done it purposely and at first she asked to see him; when she was feverish, she cried: 'Bernard, Bernard! you have committed a great crime! You have killed my father!'

"She thought her father was dead and persisted in her belief for some time. She said very little of any importance. All that Mlle. Leblanc has testified is false. In the first stages of her illness she

was delirious and later on she sank into a state of silence. She dismissed Mlle. Leblanc a week ago when consciousness returned and that proves something against the woman. That is all I have to say against M. de Mauprat. But I have more to tell, for the whole truth must be revealed. For some weeks I felt convinced of Bernard's guilt and I pondered much upon it. I told myself that a man as intelligent and as much beloved as he was by his uncle and cousin, could not be such a villain. Then it occurred to me that perhaps another Mauprat had committed the deed; I do not mean the Trappist, but the one whose death has not been confirmed except by the word of M. Jean de Mauprat.

"Believing, therefore, that Bernard was incapable of such an action, and having learned from several persons, whom I regarded as truthful, that a monk resembling a Mauprat had been in the neighborhood and having myself seen the back and gown of that monk the morning of the accident, I resolved to find out if he were in La Varenne. I ascertained that he was, or rather that he had returned thither and that he was intimate with M. Jean de Mauprat.

"Who is this monk? I asked myself. What is he doing at La Varenne? If he is a Carmelite why does he not wear the garb? If he is of M. Jean's order why is he not at the Carmelite monastery? If he is a Trappist, and does not wish to remain

there with the others, why does he not return to his cloister? Who is he? and why do he and M. Jean de Mauprat, who several times denied that he knew him, dine together from time to time at an inn at Crevant?

"I gave my testimony, even should it injure Bernard somewhat, in order to have the right to tell you what I have, should it avail nothing. As you had not the time to give to the examination of witnesses, I at once set out for my woods, to find out in my way what that monk was doing in the neighborhood. I have tracked him, discovered that he is Edmee de Mauprat's assassin, and that his name is Antoine de Mauprat."

That revelation caused excitement among the assembly. All eyes sought Jean de Mauprat, who was not to be seen, however.

"What are your proofs?" asked the chief-justice.

"I will tell you," replied Patience. "Knowing from the inn-keeper that the two monks dined with him occasionally, I took up my abode in a hermitage in the heart of the woods, about half a league distant. For two days I lived on roots and a piece of bread brought to me from the inn, for it is against my principles to lodge in such a place. The third day the boy from the tavern came to tell me that the monks were about to dine. I accompanied him home and concealed myself in a

cellar near by. The door of the cellar was shaded by an apple tree, under whose branches the two men sat. I could easily see and hear them.

"'This must be done with,' said Antoine, whom I recognized at once. 'I am tired of it. Receive me at the monastery or I will tell all.'

"'What can you tell that will not lead to your ruin?' replied M. Jean. 'Be sure that you will not set foot in the Carmelite retreat; I do not care to be involved in a criminal suit, for you would be found out there in three hours.'

"'Why, I should like to know? You make them believe that you are a saint.'

"'I am capable of conducting myself like a saint, and you act like a fool! Can you refrain from swearing for one hour?'

"'Tell me, Nepomucene, do you expect to go free if I become involved in a criminal suit?' replied the other.

"'Who knows?' replied the Trappist. 'I did not participate in your rash act, nor did I counsel anything of the kind.'

"'Ah, great Lord!'" exclaimed Antoine; "'but you are very well satisfied now that it is done. You were always a coward, and without me you would never have devised any other plan than to become a Trappist, to ape devotion, and thus receive absolution for the past, in order to have the right of

forcing a little money from our relatives at Sainte-Severe. Come, come! when Bernard is hung, the lovely Edmee dead, and the old man has gone to his grave—when we have inherited that large fortune, you will think it an excellent stroke to have gotten rid of three at once!'

"'You are mad, I say, and I shall wash my hands of you. When I was hidden in the secret chamber of the tower and heard Bernard tell his valet that he would give up his soul for Edmee, I whispered to you that there was a chance, and like a brute you took the matter seriously and without consulting me or awaiting a favorable moment, you committed a deed which should be carefully weighed and matured!'

"'A favorable moment? when could I have found a more favorable one! I was surprised by hunters in the forest. I hid behind the Gazean Tower; I saw the two turtle-doves arrive; I heard their conversation, and saw Bernard rush away like a madman. I found upon me—God knows how it came there—a loaded pistol. Paf—!'

"'Be silent, you beast!' said the other in affright; 'should one speak of such things in a place like this? Hold your tongue, or I will never see you again!'

"'You would have to see me, my sweet brother, were I to ring at the Carmelite's door!'

"'If you come there, I will denounce you!'

"'No, you will not, for I know too much about you.'

"'I do not fear you, for I have expiated my sins.'

"'Hypocrite!'

"'Come, be silent,' said the other; 'I must leave you. Here is some money.'

"'*All that!*'

"'What has a monk to give? do you think I am rich?'

"'Your Carmelites are, and you can do what you like with them.'

"Then he launched all manner of invectives at the prelate and his brother monks.

"The real Trappist tried to persuade the impostor to leave the country, but the latter was determined to remain; for, he said, were he not there, his brother would have the fortune all to himself. Then they separated.

"I came from my hiding-place and proceeded on my way to have the murderer arrested. At that moment the marshal, who had been on my trail for some time in order to force me to give evidence, seized me by the collar. I pointed out the monk in vain as Edmee's assassin; they would not listen to me, and replied that they had no warrant for his arrest. They would not let me explain, but dragged me hither like a deserter, and for a week I have been

in a cell, not daring to make myself heard. I could not even see M. Bernard's lawyer, to let him know that I was confined in prison. I do not know if this is law—but I am certain that the assassin should have been arrested and was not, and that he will not be if you do not gain possession of M. Jean de Mauprat's person, that he may not warn him.

"I swear that what I heard M. Jean de Mauprat say was free from all suspicion of complicity. As far as the act of allowing an innocent man to be delivered up to the penalties of the law, to suffer for the guilty, is concerned, that remains for you, sirs, and not for me, to decide upon."

XXVIII

After that important testimony the court adjourned for a few moments, and when they returned Edmee was before them. Pale and weak, scarcely able to walk to the arm-chair placed for her, she however showed great presence of mind.

"Can you answer the questions put to you calmly and without any difficulty?"

"I hope so, sir," she replied. "It is true that I have just recovered from a serious illness, and have for only a few days been able to exercise my memory; but I know I shall be able to reply without any trouble."

"Your name?"

"Solange-Edmonde de Mauprat."

"Your age, Mademoiselle?"

"Twenty-four."

"Are you related to the accused?"

"He is my cousin and my father's nephew."

"Do you swear to speak the truth, the whole truth?"

"Yes, sir."

"Raise your hand."

Edmee turned to Arthur with a mournful smile; he drew off her glove and helped her to raise her hand. I felt the tears course down my cheeks.

She then related the facts simply as they were, adding that it was impossible for her to say whence the shot came.

"I am the last person indeed to explain the accident. I can only attribute it to the unskillfulness of one of the huntsmen, who dared not own it—The laws are so severe and the truth is difficult to prove!"

"Then, Mademoiselle, you do not think that your cousin was the author of that deed?"

"No, sir; certainly not! I am not delirious; I should not have appeared before you had I been."

"You seem to impute the revelations you made to mental aberration."

"I made no revelations. What revelation could I have made of a fact of which I know nothing?"

"But you said, as you fell from your horse, 'Bernard, Bernard, I did not think you capable of killing me!'"

"I do not remember having said that; and if I did, I do not see what importance could be attached to the remarks of a person whose mind is wandering. I know that Bernard de Mauprat would give his life for my father and me, and it is

therefore not probable that he would wish to kill me—for what reasons?"

The chief-justice, in order to confuse her if possible, brought forth all of Mlle. Leblanc's arguments. Then she bravely defended my character. She was questioned as to her rupture with M. de la Marche, her frequent quarrels with me, my abrupt departure for America, her refusal to marry.

"This examination is very unpleasant," said she; "and I declare to you that if my life, not that of another, were at stake, you could not force from me another word. Learn, then, since you compel me to make a declaration contrary to my pride and maidenly reserve, that all that seems inexplicable to you in my conduct, all that you attribute to Bernard—his wrongs and my resentment, his menaces and my fears—is explained in these words: *I love him!*"

As she uttered those words proudly and passionately, Edmee reseated herself and covered her face with her hands.

I was carried away to such an extent by my feelings that I could not refrain from crying:

"Were I to be led to the scaffold at this moment, I should be the happiest man on earth!"

"To the scaffold! You?" cried Edmee, rising; "they shall take me first! Was it your fault that I concealed my love from you? You have paid

dearly for my ambition, which has led you to the criminal's dock. But I will make reparation; should they lead you to the gallows to-morrow, you should go there bearing the title of my husband!"

"Your generosity goes too far, Edmee de Mauprat," said the justice; "you only accuse yourself of coquetry and obduracy to save your relative! How do you account for your refusal to marry him, of seven years' duration, which excited this young man's passion?"

"Perhaps, sir," said Edmee, maliciously, "the court is not a competent judge of such a matter! Many women think that a little coquetry practiced upon the beloved one is no great sin. It is true, however, that if that coquetry would result in the condemnation of a lover, it should be corrected at once."

Here Edmee burst into tears; if she had not helped me by her confession, she had at least excited interest in my favor. Edmee was further interrogated, and corrected Mlle. Leblanc's exaggerations; she generously charged herself with all my wrongs. Alluding to the letter found upon her, she said:

"That was no threatening letter; it inspired me, as you see, with so little fear and aversion that it was found next my heart."

"But you have not explained why, during the first years of your cousin's stay at your castle, you placed a dagger under your pillow."

She blushed as she replied:

"It is true that several times I entertained thoughts of suicide because I felt within me a growing love for my cousin. Believing myself indissolubly bound to M. de la Marche, I would have died sooner than break my word, and rather than marry any other than Bernard! Later on, M. de la Marche freed me with much delicacy from my promise, and I no longer thought of death."

Edmee retired amid murmurs of approbation.

The case was postponed until the discovery and arrest of the assassin. The intendant of the province declared himself the champion of my cause and Edmee's cavalier. He started out the marshal's staff; they arrested Jean de Mauprat, who, when he found himself in danger, betrayed his brother and said he could be found at night at Roche-Mauprat, concealed in a secret chamber. The Trappist was conducted thither that he might point out the door which had baffled Marcasse; it was opened—no one was there. The tower was surrounded by soldiers—all its means of egress were well guarded. The bailiff did not comprehend our mission, but his wife's uneasiness confirmed our opinion of Antoine's presence within the tower.

The ruins must be explored. A tower separated from the other buildings seemed to offer a refuge; the means of reaching it by the staircase had been destroyed by fire, and no ladder was long enough.

"A means must be found," said Marcasse. "I have one."

He climbed a beam blackened by fire, which connected the tower with the adjoining building. In its side was a large aperture. In his explorations Marcasse remembered having seen the steps of a small staircase through this aperture; though the beam had been rendered somewhat unsafe by fire and Marcasse had never ventured upon it, when the moment presented itself he did not hesitate. Had I known of his intentions, I should have forbidden him to run the risk. Imagine my feelings on seeing my faithful friend walking gravely across the beam in mid-air toward his goal, with Blaireau in front of him. I could not suppress a cry of fear when two shots issued from the tower. Marcasse's hat fell at the first; the second grazed his shoulder. He halted.

"I am not hurt!" he called to us; and continuing on his way, he entered the tower, crying:

"Follow me, my friends; the beam is safe!"

He was immediately followed by the five bold men who had accompanied him. When the foremost entered the loft into which Antoine de Mau-

prat had retreated he found him struggling with Marcasse, who, elated with his triumph and forgetting that his object was not to kill but to capture, had unsheathed his sword in order to run the man through as he would a weasel. But the false monk proved a formidable rival. He wrested the sword from the sergeant's hand, threw him to the ground, and would have strangled him had not some one fallen upon him from behind. He offered a desperate resistance, but the five men succeeded in subduing him. I threw myself into my faithful follower's arms.

"It was nothing," said he; "it has amused me. I have found out that I still have a sure foot and a cool head."

XXIX

Antoine, who always exhibited great bravado in his speech, was a coward when it came to action; he no sooner found himself in the hands of the law than he confessed all. The two brothers accused each other of infamy. The Trappist coldly abandoned the murderer to his fate, and denied having advised him to commit the crime. The other, in his despair, accused him of the most horrible deeds—of having poisoned both my mother and Edmee's; he was, he said, an adept at preparing poisons and mixing them with food. At the time that Edmee was at Roche-Mauprat, they had decided to get rid of her and me at one stroke, and Jean was concocting the dose when the marshal attacked the tower.

Jean denied those accusations; and as nothing could be proven, he was merely sent back to La Trappe, and ordered by the Archbishop never to set foot in the diocese and never to leave his monastery. He died there several years later.

I was no sooner acquitted than I hastened to Edmee's side, and arrived in time to be present at

my uncle's death-bed. He recognized me, pressed me to his bosom, blessed me, and placed his daughter's hand in mine.

After his death we left the country for a time, in order not to witness Antoine's execution. Mlle. Leblanc, who could not be prosecuted for perjury, spent the remainder of her days in another province.

We could not separate at once from our friends, my sole defenders, Marcasse, Patience, Arthur, and Abbe Aubert. We all entered the same railway carriage as one family. We visited Switzerland, which journey Arthur considered necessary to the complete re-establishment of Edmee's health.

XXX

At the expiration of Edmee's term of mourning, we returned to Sainte-Severe with great joy. Edmee's first act was to gather the choicest flowers in the garden and lay them on her father's grave; we then together made a vow to leave behind us a name as honored and noble as his.

Our marriage was celebrated privately in the village chapel. No one but Arthur, the priest, Marcasse, and Patience assisted at our modest banquet. What need had we of strange witnesses of our bliss? We were happy and joyous among ourselves.

Patience returned to his cottage and refused to give up his secluded life. Marcasse remained with me until his death, toward the close of the French Revolution.

Arthur, who had given up to us a whole year, could not determine to leave entirely his country and his work. He returned to Philadelphia, where I visited him, after my wife's death.

I will not tell you how happy my life was with her. She bore me six children, four of whom are

still living and are a credit to their family. I have lived for them, as my wife requested me to. She was the only woman I ever loved. I am thus constituted: those whom I love I love forever—in the past, present, and future.

"Those are all the incidents of my life," said old Mauprat, "in which Edmee played a part. If there be anything beneficial in my story, profit by it, young people. Seek to have a frank counselor, a severe friend; and love not him who flatters, but him who corrects you. Do not believe too much in Physiognomy or in Fatality—at least never exhort any one to abandon himself to the latter. That is the moral of my story."

* * * * * *

After that advice supper was served and we chatted the remainder of the evening. We asked Bernard to develop more fully what he called "the moral of his story;" he then advanced general principles, the wisdom and purity of which impressed us.

"I spoke of Physiognomy," said he, "not to criticize a science which has its good side. I used the word because the only Fatality which is believed in, in our days, is that which our instincts create in us. I do not think that Physiognomy treats of Fatality more than any other science of that kind, and La-

vater, accused of Fatalism, is to my mind a more Christian man than the Gospel ever presented.

"What I tell you is perhaps not very orthodox, but it is true. Man is not born wicked; man is born with more or less passions, with more or less power to satisfy them, with more or less aptitude for taking a good or bad position in the world; but Education can and should prove the remedy for all. This is the great problem to solve—it is to find the education suitable to each individual. General education seems necessary—does it follow that it should be the same for all? I think that if I had been to school at ten years of age I would have been tamed sooner; but would they have suppressed my violent passions and helped me to conquer them as Edmee has? I doubt it. Every one must be loved in order to accomplish anything, but they must be loved in different ways; one with indefatigable indulgence, another with severity.

"My reply to the question of how to solve the problem of a common education for all, yet suited to each individual, is for one to correct the other, and one to love the other. Thus influencing laws by morals, you will conquer the most odious and impious of all, the law of retaliation, which is simply a principle of Fatality, since it assumes that the guilty are incorrigible and Heaven implacable."

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